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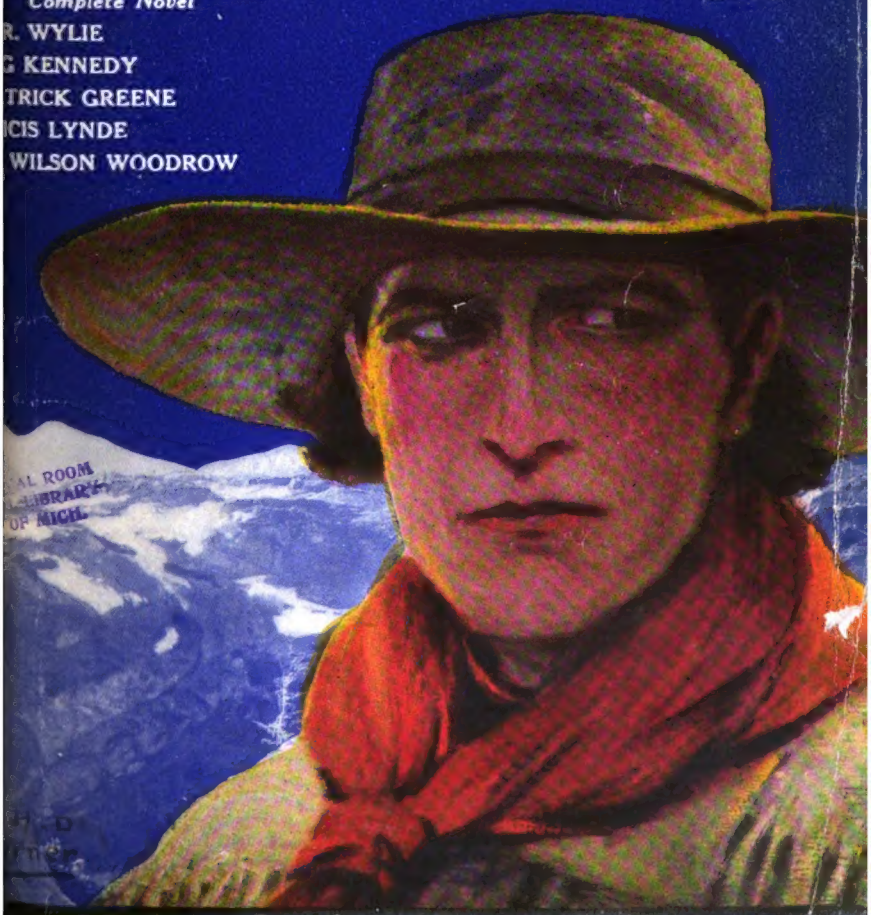

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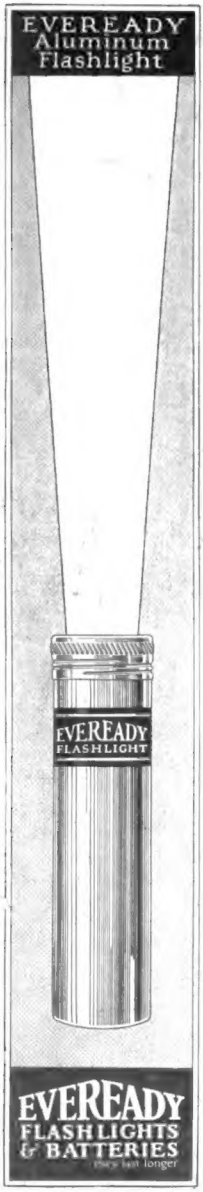

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Everybody's

NUMBER FOUR OCTOBER, 1923 VOLUME XLIX

If It's in Everybody's It's a Good Story

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Kildare . . . saw two brown eyes, wistful, soft, full of gentleness, a face as fair as a flower. The image fell warmly upon his mind—and then she was gone.

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Swift-Moving, Colorful Romance, With a Critical Period of American History as a Background

Kildare of the Border

The Pony Express Was Only an Experiment, the French Held Mexico, While General Sherman's Army Was Awaiting Orders at the Border. Excellent Material, Skilfully Presented, in a Novel both Entertaining and Educationally Helpful

By John T. McIntyre

Author of "Blowing Weather"

Illustrations by Charles Hargens

OF TWO pictures, here is the first: St. Joe, Missouri, of an April afternoon in the year 1860—St. Joe, the western terminus of the American railroad of that day; St. Joe on the banks of the slow-rolling, strong Missouri, beyond which the great trails began: the Santa Fe, the Oregon, pushing away across desert and plain and mountain, into the wilderness where nature struck with heavy hand, and savage men rode and ravaged, pillaged and burned. On this afternoon in mild April, throngs of people gathered in the streets of the frontier town—throngs of people who talked quietly but carried expectancy in their faces. The clock in the tower of the Boston Store told four; there was a sudden grinding of metal wheels upon metal rails, a rush of escaping steam, the staccato strokes of an engine-bell. A sudden roaring broke from the crowd; excitedly, with popping eyes and mouths open, they surrounded the train from the east. The good-natured engineer wiped the black smudge from his face at his cab window, and the baggageman threw open the door of his car. An excited youth, with snapping, alert eyes, seized a mail-pouch which came hurling toward him and leaped with it into a light wagon.

"Clear the way!" he cried. "Make way for the mail bound west!"

Down the dirt street rattled the wagon; the crowd raced after it. At the post-office the pouch once more took flight, this time through an open door. It was unlocked; deft hands assorted the letters. Into a leather *mochila* with four pockets were thrust certain of them and the pockets locked. And while this was proceeding, a buckskin pony, saddled, pawing the dirt, and showing every indication of wanting to go, stood before the Pike's Peak livery-stables. A youth of about twenty, in a wide-rimmed felt hat, buckskin jacket and light boots, stood at the pony's side, while a big man of middle age held a watch in his hand.

"How is it, Mr. Russell?" finally asked the youth.

"Up you go, Johnny!" said the big man, snapping the watch shut and dropping it into his pocket.

The youth leaped agilely into the saddle; the pony reared under the tightening rein.

"Ride hard, but carefully; don't hesitate

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to ask power where there is power to give; but also remember, you, and your horses, too, are only flesh and blood. Forward, now, and good luck!"

The mustang leaped away; the crowd that filled the street made a lane for it all the way to the post-office door. Here the rider drew up his mount, grabbed the *mochila*, attached it to his saddle, and was gone. At the river landing, a wide-beamed, steam ferry was panting; the pony, lithe, his wiry muscles rippling under his shining skin, thundered aboard; the craft let go its moorings and breasted the sullen flood. At the Kansas side, almost before the ferry had made fast, pony and rider were ashore. Through the street of the wooden, frontier town they fled, out into the open trail and away—to endure the hardships of the desert, to face hostile, lurking foes, to make history.

For this was the first rider of the Pony Express; on that day the system, celebrated in the annals of the West, had its beginning, and the pouch containing a dozen or so letters for Sacramento, two thousand miles through the wilderness from St. Joe, also held the first thin thread of that strong bond that was to tie the States and territories of the Pacific Coast to the Union in the days of war that were so soon to come.

AND of the two pictures, here is the second: The scene is not a border town facing the American wilderness, but Paris, France—a new and splendid Paris, with widened streets and stately public buildings, the Paris of Napoleon III, at once nephew and step-grandson of the great Bonaparte. It is not the dirt streets of St. Joe, Missouri, crowded by a pioneer people, but the splendid palace of the Tuileries. A heavy-eyed man, in a handsome uniform, sat at a table. His age was about fifty; his hair was graying; he had a mustache and imperial with long waxed points. This was Louis Napoleon, Emperor of the French. Near by was the Empress Eugénie, a beautiful Spanish woman, idolized by all Europe; and at the other side of the table, a number of papers before him, was a fat Swiss banker, Jecker by name, who, at the time, controlled the greater part of the finances of France. In a smooth, plausible voice the Swiss was saying:

"There is no doubt, your Majesty, as the developments of this later time have shown, that it was a mistake for your uncle, Napoleon I, to have sold Louisiana to the Americans. To be sure, in his day the territory was useless to France—it was hard to defend; it was the cause of endless differences, and no one foresaw the tremendous importance that is now attached to it. Nevertheless, it should have been held."

The emperor nodded.

"If France had retained control over that region," he said, "the whole face of things would now be altered."

"The influence of French possession would have been incalculable," agreed the Swiss banker. "The war between Mexico and the United States in 1848 would never have taken place. Texas, California, New Mexico, Arizona would still be Mexican territory; France would stand between this whole region and the American republic; Mexico would be in the empire's grasp."

The long, slim fingers of Louis tapped the polished top of the table.

"The mineral wealth of the American West that once was French territory," said he, "is almost beyond understanding. The mountains and valleys are rich in all the precious metals—copper, iron, lead, all the useful ones are there in quantities enough to make Europe a continent of ease. And then the great plains will some day yield harvests beyond present comprehension. The timber is wondrous; the Pacific and South American trade will be enormous."

"Ah!" said the Swiss. "That trade, your Majesty, is the important thing in the end. The revenues *it* would bring France would be greater far than those derived from any other source. For it would develop the empire in new ways. It would slacken the growing grip of the Americans upon the world's commerce; it would add to the growth of the French marine."

There was a light in the usually heavy eyes of Louis Napoleon; for a space he sat and dreamed. The empress watched him, a smile at the corners of her charming mouth, a laugh in her handsome eyes.

"But," she said, "what you both say is only what might have been. Louisiana no longer belongs to France; its riches is the reward of enterprise, for American hardihood. And all the trade which its possession compels is in the hands of American merchants."

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The light died out of the emperor's eyes; he ceased to dream. There was a furrow across his brow as he turned to Eugénie.

"You are quite right," he said, and in spite of the furrow his smile answered her own. But in a moment he was grave again. "Times have changed, and things have changed with them. The wealth of the century seems slipping to other places. Europe, the seat of the world's culture, is coming gradually to decay. Even the English shopkeepers, shrewd traders that they are, are no match for this growing American power. If the present tendency continues, if the seas keep crowded with swift Yankee clippers and their ever-increasing steam craft, with the world's virgin opportunities their own—unchallenged—who knows how far they will go?"

THE smile of the empress was now gone; for what the emperor said was a thought that had possessed the statesmen of Europe for the last decade. America was distancing them in the race for opulence; Europe was apparently destined to the part of a follower—a plodding trailer—thrifty, of course, but dull, with no more of those flashes of genius which had made the continent the lamp of the world.

"Your Majesties?" said Jecker. The others looked at him, and the emperor nodded. "There are many ways of bringing about a thing as there are persons, temperaments or personalities. To check the commercial advance of a challenging nation, Napoleon would have thought in terms of armies. In the matter which now faces us, armies are not necessary—at least not yet, and not our armies. For in the United States the cloud is rising that has wrecked many nations equally strong. On the question of the extension of slavery, dissension is muttering; blood has been spilled along the border. The day will come, and"—here the fat Swiss nodded confidently—"it is not far distant, when the trader of the North and the aristocrat of the South will face each other on a drawn line. A step across this by either, will mean war; and when that war comes——" The speaker paused and leaned forward, one fat, white hand uplifted, his shrewd eyes full of purpose. "When that war comes, your Majesty's opportunities will also have come."

"You mean Mexico?" asked the emperor.

"I mean Mexico—that forlorn, revolution-torn country," said Jecker. "With the United States gripped in a civil war, your Majesty will not lack opportunity to step into Mexico with that governmental aid which you so frequently thought of. The gold country of the United States is in the remote West; the timber, the metals so desired by manufacturers are there, too, in territory that once belonged to France, or" —and the eyes of the banker went to the empress—"to Spain. Once let France step into Mexico upon the benevolent mission of peace and establish herself, who shall say what will be the ultimate fate of those remote, rich places?"

It was now the emperor who held up his hand, and the gesture was one of silence.

"The future's secrets belong to the future," he said. "And it was not to discuss them, Jecker, that this audience was given you. These documents"—and he pointed to the papers on the table before the Swiss—"I believe, refer to certain indebtedness of the Mexican government to certain French subjects."

"Yes, your Majesty," said the Swiss. "They contain the facts of Mexico's deep indebtedness to French investors of substance. Much money is endangered by the constant civil disturbances in that country; it sometimes looks as if your subjects would lose all they so courageously and kindly adventured to help the Mexican people."

"That is not to be heard of," said the emperor. "Such a loss is not necessary, and should not be."

"Fears for these worthy French bankers' and tradesmen's investments are grave," said the Swiss, his fingers dexterously moving among the papers and a cunning light in his eye. "For Mexico is going from bad to worse; it looks as if nothing would ever enable her to pay what she owes unless stern measures be taken."

"What?" asked the emperor.

"The most simple method would be that France advance her standard at the head of an army of occupation, and so save this unfortunate people from anarchy."

Again the emperor made the silencing gesture; but the empress, watching, saw a fixed look—a look she had grown accustomed to associate with a certain state of mind—come into the heavy eyes. And Jecker shifted and shuffled and reordered

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his papers. His thick lips wore a smile—and his shrewd brain reached forward until it touched the desired day which was to turn plans and aspirations into facts.

AND, across the Atlantic, the waves washed upon the sand or the rocks; tides rose and filled the rivers; great towns stood where forests had once shut out the sun; industry quickened, commerce cut new and newer channels; skill and courage had made a swift and wonderful way to the banks of the Missouri. But beyond was the vast empire over which wilderness still held sway—the vast, rich empire the worth of which was so little realized by the simple pioneers that fringed it, but which the keen minds of European statesmen saw so clearly. Vast plain, arid desert, mountain range, great lakes and watercourses—possibilities unlimited! And all so far from the seat of government, so distant from any considerable force that might be thrown into it that such a movement was all but hopeless, so wondrously sown with potentialities as to forever tempt conquest, it lay beneath sun and storm—waiting. And at that very time, across the prairies, through Kansas, into Nebraska, up the valley of the Platte, sped the Pony Express with that first thin, spiderlike thread, one day to grow into the mighty cable that tied West to East across the great plateau, into the foothills, over the looming Rockies, to suffer the arid pangs of the Great Basin, breasting the Wasatch Range, the valley of the Great Salt Lake, and the alkali deserts of Nevada; through the sink of the Carson River, the snowy Sierras and then, breathless, triumphant, horse and man hurled themselves into the Sacramento Valley in nine days' time. And all California rose up at the news. The thought of isolation left her; she felt the touch of her kindred, and she was no longer afraid.

ALONG the hard and perilous way of the Pony Express into the dim regions of the West were one hundred and ninety relay-stations; these were under the care of some four hundred picked keepers, known fighters and oath-bound. Distributed along the route were between four hundred and five hundred of the hardiest ponies and horses in the West; and eighty skilled riders, steel-nerved, dead shots, keen, swift, resourceful, always stood ready, no matter what the obstacle, to carry the mail through to its destination.

On the night after Johnny Fry, the young rider of the opening westward journey of the express, started across the Kansas plains, St. Joe flamed with excitement and pride. Every institution boasted by a border town was wide-open and operating; and among these was Spanish Pete's Hotel, gambling-hall and drinking-place. It was a shapeless timber structure, cut up into sleeping-rooms at one side, but on the other were the bar, and the gambling-hall, broad, low-ceilinged, and with a wide communicating doorway.

The bar was crowded. The busy attendants set out bottles and glasses; coin rattled into the till in a steady stream; groups surrounded the tables; from the gambling-hall came the rattle of chips, the whirl of the wheel and the flip of the cards from the boxes. The talk was mostly of the event of the day. Slim as the thing looked to the eye, lacking as it was in spectacular features, it had made a deep impression.

"Gentlemen," said a big man in a flannel shirt, dusty boots, and the unkempt look of one newly returned from the desert country, "I mention the firm of Russell, Majors & Waddell."

A shout went up at the names; for it was these three men who had made the Pony Express possible. The big man lifted his glass higher.

"To the Central Overland California and Pike's Peak Express!" he said, giving the adventure its official title.

The glasses were emptied and refilled; voices lifted in praise and expectation; things were said which reflected the glow in the minds behind the words.

In a corner, at an unpainted table and under a swinging lamp, sat a group who paid no attention to the others in the room. One was a dark man with a cold, even expression and insolent eyes; a second was old, dry, wrinkled and with a cunning look; the third was a fat Spaniard, who breathed heavily and seemed to enjoy his drink.

"What can be the end of this enterprise?" asked the old man. "What will it result in? Is trade to suffer; are the wagon trains to California, to Oregon, to Santa Fe to be disturbed? Is the money invested in them to be lost?"

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But the dark man shook his head. He smiled, and in the smile was a sneer.

"Have no fear, Señor Prentiss," said he. "There is much noise about this matter, for you Americans are always noisy over a new thing. But you will see; it will come to nothing in the end. The odds are too great. Matched against such distances, heat, snow, deep rivers, mountain passes, deserts, bandits, roving bands of Indians, a man and horse can not win. Your wagon trains will still be the important thing; and the prices you see fit to ask for your goods" —with a laugh in which there was a note of malice—"will not be questioned."

Old Simon Prentiss regarded the Mexican with the shrewd look that was native to him.

"It is not for the Latin to judge the fiber of the Saxon breed," he said. "With any other human strain I'd grant the truth of what you say. But the pioneers gathered on this border, looking out over the wild places, are of a race that has the impulse to push forward, to conquer. They will do many unexpected things before they are done; and sometimes I fear constant and ready communication with the points of the Southwest and the Pacific will be among them."

The fat Spaniard groaned over his brandy.

"Now, God save us!" he said. "What an unsettled, striving people they are! Why do they not stay comfortably at home and permit matters to go the way Providence devised? Could anything be more fitting than that your stage-coaches should run once a month, señor? Could anything be more desirable than that your trains of wagons should carry supplies beyond the desert and mountains? What do these restless Americans want? Do they think they can one day push their steel rails through the wilderness? Do they fancy they can string their wires on poles through all that vast region, to carry messages for them by this electric invention—a thing which God on His throne in heaven can hardly favor? There must be an end to their desires, Señor Prentiss. They are but men; they can not do everything."

Old Simon Prentiss smiled his thin smile.

"The frontier line of to-day is at the Missouri," he said. "Don't forget that in the memory of men still living it was at the Ohio. Year after year it has been pushed forward; from now on the speed of the movement will grow greater; modern methods, ingenious inventions will help this." The old fox rubbed his skinny hands together. "I do not want it to be," he said; "my business will suffer. But I can not shut my eyes to it. It is inevitable."

THE Mexican leaned forward and touched him upon the arm.

"The frontier has been pushed forward in times in which all the American people's superfluous energies could be given to the task," he said. "Peace was everywhere. Suppose"—and the man nodded his head significantly—"this long peace should end. Suppose the North and South should cease their wrangling and come to blows. And suppose"—here a light snapped in the insolent eyes; the cold mouth wore a look of sneering malice—"suppose the nations of Europe took advantage of the situation to reach out and reclaim the territory that once floated their flags. If that came true, the American frontier might linger on the line of the Missouri for a long time to come."

But old Simon Prentiss did not cease to rub his skinny, covetous hands together, and his crafty eyes did not change in expression.

"Europe," said he. "That means France and Spain." He sucked in his thin lips and his head shook. "It is written into the history of their times on this continent," he said, "that trade did not flourish. The governments were too heavy with their taxes, and the government agents required to be bribed."

The Mexican laughed.

"Ah, well," he said, "I'm sure your company would not stop at that, *señor*. A bribe, carefully placed, does wonders at times. It might be heavy—but then think of the opportunities it might put into a clever man's hand!"

For all old Simon did not alter his expression, there was a certain interest in his tone as he said:

"More than once, Rayon, you have mentioned this subject of European intervention in Mexico, an American civil war and the reclaiming of all the western region by France and Spain. What base is there for your talk; what is there behind the rumors I hear whispered from day to day?"

Everybody's Magazine, October, 1923

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"The base of what I say or what any one else says on this subject is trade," answered Rayon. "The country that commands the commerce of the prairies and the mountains is the country that will command the trade with South America and with the Pacific. It's one of the gems of the world's traffic. Europe sees it, and Europe will reach forward and possess herself of it if the chance be given her."

"None of that is news to me," persisted old Prentiss. "Those things are all parts of the common rumor. But, I take it, you have more than rumor to go on." And his thin lips drew back in a tight smile. "You are no man, Rayon, to be moved by empty gossip. There is something more solid somewhere. So let's have it; let's come directly to the point."

Rayon smiled his cold smile; he snapped his fingers, and a furtive-looking half-breed was almost instantly at his side.

"Miguel," said Rayon, "go into the next room and tell Alvarez I want him."

The half-breed grinned; his yellow teeth showed unpleasantly.

"Alvarez is gambling, *señor*," he said.

"No matter," said Rayon sharply. "Do as I say."

Miguel's sly grin grew even more unpleasant.

"Let the *señor* listen," he said.

A din of voices had lifted in the gambling-hall; there was a crash of overturning tables. There were blows. Above all was a hoarse voice, which demanded in Spanish:

"My money! Quick—my money! Let there be no delay. I have been cheated; I have shut my eyes because a woman was the dealer, and I have been robbed. My gold-pieces upon the table, or, by the Mother of God, I'll speak with bullets!"

With an oath, Rayon pushed back his chair and got up.

"It's Alvarez!" he said.

The fat Spaniard turned a pale yellow; his short breath became a gasping wheeze.

"That tiger!" he said. "What does he mean by talk of bullets? Safety, *señores!* If the rascal begins to shoot, let us put something between our bodies and his villainy."

BUT Rayon paid no heed to this. In a moment he was in the next room, and his quick eye took in all that was going on. There was an overturned table; cards were scattered upon the floor; a girl, strikingly beautiful, with great dark eyes and a defiantly reared head, faced a pantherish-looking Mexican who stood, crouching and tense, his drink-inflamed eyes fixed upon her. Spanish Pete, the keeper of the hall, was rising from the floor, a smear of blood upon his face; and as he rose his hand instinctively sought a weapon. But a shot rang out and he fell back. A revolver showed in the hand of Alvarez, and an ape-like smile was upon his face as he menaced the crowd.

"One step, *señores!*" he said. "Only one step, and I fire!" Then his gaze went back to the girl. "My money," he said. "Every peso, *señorita*. I'll have it in gold as I laid it down."

"The game was honest," said the girl, her dark eyes never quailing. "I turned the cards as they came out of the box. You have nothing to complain of."

"My money!" said the Mexican. "Three hundred American dollars. Now!" He held out his left hand. "Paid down in gold. I feel an itch in that hand, *señorita*. It must clutch something—and if it is not my money it will be your throat!"

He advanced one step, two, three. But the girl did not move, and just as the out-held hand seemed about to grasp her, there came a sudden movement from one side. The revolver-hand of Alvarez was clamped fast at the wrist and the weapon was snatched away.

"Faith, now," said a voice, "can you not be reasonable? Is it threaten a woman with a weapon in your hand you'd be doing? God save us! Are there no gentlemen any more, at all?"

With a snarl the Mexican turned; and he found before him a supple-looking young man, deep-chested, wide-shouldered and with a good-looking, good-humored face.

"Sure, everybody knows Spanish Pete," went on this person; "and everybody knows he'll get your bit of money if you gamble at any of his tables. 'Twas a nice blow that knocked him down, and good luck to you! But putting your hand on a woman is another thing, so it is. Get your money from Pete if you can, but hold back your fist when it comes to the girl."

Alvarez listened to this with his eyes half closed; then, with a leap, he was upon the young man and gripped him hard. There

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was a confidence in the thing that told of a man accustomed to victory. The Mexican had a barrel-like body and immense arms; he was a character feared in every settlement south to Santa Fe. Hulking teamsters, river-men, wild horsemen of the trails and men from the mountains and desert had met him in their day and fallen before his strength and ferocity. They had matched their dull, brute power against his, and been beaten. But, now, as Alvarez's grip fastened upon the stranger, he realized the difference. The good-humored Celt seemed suddenly transformed. He was like no human thing—he was whalebone; he was gunpowder; he was a living flame. With a suppleness and a swiftness that bewildered the bravo, the young man twisted himself free and began shooting short, crushing blows into the Mexican's body. Alvarez reeled back, his knees bending. Then Rayon intervened; the crowd closed in; Spanish Pete was picked up and helped away; there was a hubbub of voices; all was confusion.

"Who is that?" asked a bystander of the big man who had proposed the toast to the organizers of the Pony Express, and he pointed to the young stranger.

The big man laughed.

"That's Tom Kildare," he said, "the wildest Irishman that ever rode into Santa Fe—a whirlwind with his fists, and the quickest man with a gun I ever saw."

The dark-eyed girl who had defied the Mexican found herself near to Kildare in the confusion.

"I thank you," she said. "You have been kind."

There was something in the voice and in the glance she gave him that stirred him suddenly; but in spite of this there was a humorous look about his mouth.

"Why, then, *agra,*" said he, "to set to thumping the ribs of the like of that fellow is nothing at all. Sure, a boy could do it and he properly schooled." The humorous look was now in his eyes as well as about his mouth; he surveyed her keenly. "And now that I have given him a good belting about the body, do you, like a good girl, give him back his money."

The girl gazed at him for a moment, puzzled. Plainly, here was a type new to her. A man attacks you; you beat him off; then you interest yourself in seeing that justice is done him.

"That man is a fool," she said. "If he has no more sense than risk his money where he does not know the game, he deserves to lose it."

"There is something about you that takes me," said the young man, admiration plain in his look. "But 'tis a one-sided thinker you are, *agra.* If *he* didn't know the game was fixed, *you* did. So give him back his money, and bad luck to him."

Again she looked at him, and then she laughed; her dark eyes flashed amusement and interest. From a buckskin bag at her waist she took a handful of double eagles. Then she faced Alvarez, who stood protesting drunkenly, a group of friends about him.

"You risk your money and lose," she said scornfully. "Then you whimper until you get it back." She threw the gold-pieces at his feet. "There! Take it and go!"

She turned away, and as she went her eyes met those of the young Irishman. He swept off his broad hat and smiled, and his look followed her with admiration as she went gracefully down the long hall.

SPANISH Pete, in his day, had carried more than one bullet in his tough body; so another made no great difference. And while a surgeon patched him up, Alvarez went unmolested by the law and sat quietly in a private room at the Great Western Hotel. At the table with him were Rayon and the trader, Simon Prentiss. The alcohol had died out in the bravo's brain, and in the hands of Rayon he seemed manageable enough.

"Señor Prentiss is interested in Mexico," said Rayon to the bravo. "He is leaving the city to-night, and before he goes. I would like you, who know certain things at first hand, to tell him just what the conditions are, and what the future is to bring."

The wicked eyes of Alvarez sought out the crafty ones of Simon Prentiss; the old trader gestured for him to proceed.

"I know what has been done," said Alvarez in Spanish, "but many a man knows that. I have served under Miramon and other generals who have tried to drive Juarez and Ortega out of the mountains; but the peons and Indians are with them

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and they will hold their place. There is no power in Mexico that can beat the Constitutionalists. Help must be had from Europe—and help is being sought."

"Ha!" said old Prentiss. "And, who, *señor*, is asking for it?"

But Alvarez shook his head.

"That is not for me to say," he replied. "Danger is in such an attempt, and darkness must cover it. But, I *can* say, *señor*, that persons of name have gone from Mexico to France, to Spain, to other places. The matter is organized; they have attracted the attention of those in authority. Let one safe moment come and a blow will fall that will change the face of things. From then on, Mexico will once more be a place for *caballeros;* a man of estate and name can have his way and live as he was meant to live, and not as now, when he must give most of his attention to the curs that come crowding into his track."

"But California," said Simon, his thin, grasping old hands rubbing at each other, "New Mexico, Texas, Louisiana—what of them?"

Alvarez grinned and shook his head.

"They are for the future, *señor*," he said. "And if the future is kind, who knows what will happen? It is not for me to say."

"There are those in Mexico who must regret California," suggested old Simon. "And to lose it at such a time as they did, just upon the verge of the wonderful discoveries of gold! I should think they'd be in a fury and, now that a chance shows, they'd leave nothing undone to get it back."

"There are those in Mexico who have thought of nothing else since that rich fringe was torn from their country's robe," said Alvarez. "And if the day comes, *señor*, the blow will not be lacking."

They talked for some time, Rayon putting in a word here and there. The questions Simon Prentiss asked were shrewd; he never failed in them to touch a vital place. But the answers he received were ready; the conditions they indicated promised much to a man of his turn of mind, and his crafty old eyes glinted at the prospect. At such a time as this—early in the planning, when the matter was yet forming—there was no limit to what might be done. It was like training a sapling—a little effort now and the tree would grow as one wished. Whole vast regions might be won merely by the outlay of a little interest.

"But it's growing late," said the old trader, after a time. "I must rest—at my time of life a man can not neglect such things. Early in the morning I take the railroad with my niece to St. Louis."

At this there was a quick look of interest in Rayon's eyes.

"Ah, yes! She goes to the convent school. I trust the *señorita* is well."

"She is in perfect health," said old Simon acidly. "In perfect health and hungry for knowledge. Her schooling will cost me a pretty penny before she's through."

Rayon laughed.

"But think of the result! A few years with the good nuns and the *señorita* will not only be beautiful—she will be accomplished, perfected—a credit to you."

"I prefer to write my credits into my ledgers," said the old trader. "Placed there, they are of some value."

Rayon's white teeth still showed in a smile. But through the smile was an ugly desire.

"I am surprised that she is with you," he said. "I have not seen her."

Simon Prentiss bent his brows at the man and his eyes were hard and suspicious.

"And you shall not," he said coldly. "She is not here to be shown off and flattered, Rayon, but to make the best haste she can to the convent, where I can wash my hands of her for some years to come. The children of younger brothers are a pest when they are orphaned and left alone," added old Simon bitterly. "There is that boy, her brother—such a headstrong, opinionated young cub was never born before. He is the curse of my life, with his ideas, his honesty and his honor. Pish! To the devil with such notions! No man could do business with them." The trader rose. "He has lived since childhood on my charity, but he has the manners of a person of independent substance. But I'll strip him of his pride one of these days. I'll bend him!"

WHEN the old man had gone, Rayon remained talking with Alvarez for some time. Then the two parted, and Rayon went to Spanish Pete's hotel. It was now rather late, but the place was still crowded, and at one end, in a small

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"Your Majesties," said Jecker, . . . "To check the commercial advance of a challenging nation Napoleon would have thought in terms of armies."

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alcove, hung with handsome skins and Indian blankets, he found the dark-eyed girl who had braved the drunken Alvarez that afternoon. She was sewing an intricate bead pattern upon the sleeve of a buckskin shirt; but as the Mexican came in she rose quickly and met him with glad, out-stretched hands.

"Vincente!" she said.

The man bent and kissed her upon the cheek. She looked up at him.

"You are not thinking of me," she said, softly. "I can always tell when your mind is on other things. And I do not like you that way, Vincente. I am selfish, and want you to think of me—always."

He stood off from her and searched her with an unpleasant look.

"I am thinking of you," he said. "And what I am thinking brought me here to-night."

"I have displeased you?" she said. She put her white hands against his breast and looked into his eyes. "I am sorry, Vincente. I hate myself when I cause you to look unkindly at me. But what have I done? Tell me, and I will do it no more."

"It happens that this man, Alvarez, whom you cheated at faro this afternoon, is one of my most serviceable aides. How often have I warned you to be careful in such things? Why must you continually run risks which could easily be avoided by a little forethought? A thing like this might ruin the careful work of weeks."

"Is that man *your* friend?" Her eyes flashed and her hands clenched. "I had not expected that, Vincente! Who is he that he should complain when he is outtricked—a cattle-stealer, a road-agent, a——"

But the man stopped her.

"He is useful to me," said Rayon. "So let that be enough."

The cold selfishness of the saying kindled a spark of resentment in her; her eyes flashed and her head went up. For a moment it seemed she'd make an angry reply. But she did not. Almost instantly the soft look came back, and her voice was gentle as she spoke.

"If he is useful," she said, "if he can be made to help in the great plan you are forming, it is enough. I am satisfied."

"Every one who has courage and experience and a desire to gain money is useful to me," said Rayon. "The time is ripening when I shall need them all."

"Vincente"—there was a new note in her voice, a sparkle in her eye that had not been there before—"I have thought of that very thing more than once. Clever people, people with courage, people with shrewdness—they are what you need. And to-day I saw one who, if you knew him, I think would prove one of a thousand. I mean the man who came between me and Alvarez."

There was interest in the face of the Mexican.

"Who is he?" he asked. "What do you know of him?"

"His name is Kildare," she said. "He's a wagon-boss in one of Russell, Majors & Waddell's trains to Santa Fe. A fighting man," she said, her handsome eyes snapping with admiration; "a man who would go far in any enterprise. I saw that with one look. You should get his interest, Vincente; his breed has value."

Rayon shook his head.

"These Irish are hard to control," he said. "It is likely he is as fixed in his mind concerning the future greatness of these States as any American."

"No man is hard to control if properly managed," said the girl. "None of them are so fixed in their minds but they can be influenced. Vincente"—and she looked at him assuredly—"if this young man can help you gain what you desire, I will give him to you."

"You will *give* him to me?" The Mexican looked at her, narrowly. "Before you give, you must first possess."

The girl smiled and nodded her head.

"If I desire him, he shall be mine," she said. The man laughed; there was once more the gleam of interest in his face. "For," she continued, "when I looked at him, Vincente, I read something in his eyes. I have but to lift my finger, my dear, and he will come to me. And when he once does that, he'll be mine to do with as I will."

PEDRO MARQUEZ, the fat Spaniard who had sat at the table with the trader, Simon Prentiss, and Vincente Rayon just before the altercation in the gaming-hall, smoked a quiet cigarette next morning in the public room of the Great Western Hotel. At a window stood Tom Kildare, his thumbs hooked into his broad

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leather belt and the sun playing in his thick copper-colored hair.

"Now, God save you for a very upright but, at the same time, very slow-thinking man," Kildare was saying smilingly. "You are honest in your ideas, Pedro—I've found most fat men to be so—but you are wrong in this one, at least. The Pony Express will be a useful thing entirely; no better thought has come to any one in the West for years."

The fat Spaniard shook his head.

"It is money wasted," he said. "Have I not been with Señor Prentiss's enterprises for years? Was I not with other pack and wagon ventures years before that? Do I not know the trials and the misadventures one can meet upon them? No one can make such an adventure as this one pay a profit."

"Why, then, who is thinking of a profit?" asked Kildare. "Who is thinking of the dirty bit of money, Pedro, when there is a public duty to be gone through with? Are not the people of all these far-off places on the Pacific Coast and among those divil's own big mountains tickled down to the toes of them at the chance of getting word from the rest of the country in ten days' time, instead of a month, as it used to be? What matter the profit, Pedro, if the heart in your body begins to sing with gladness? For all the profit in the world isn't equal to that."

But Pedro Marquez had his own notions.

"Profit brings gladness," he said stolidly. "I have seen it. Also I have seen glad people become sad at the loss of profit."

"Well—bad luck to them!—so have I," said Kildare, laughing. "The world is full of such people; the bit of money colors their whole lives. They can do nothing at all without it." He looked at the Spaniard, and added: "Now, there's the old weasel you are employed with, Pedro. I know him by reputation only; but that tells me he is one who'd never lift a hand to do a deed that hadn't the glitter of gold behind it."

Fat Pedro did not deny this; on the contrary, he nodded a ready agreement.

"Señor Prentiss is a trader," he said. "He sends his enterprises long ways into the deserts and mountains; they are expensive, and so, must bring good rewards. But, at the same time"—and the Spaniard nodded his round head—"Señor Prentiss is not without kindliness and a sense of duty, no matter what is said against him. He is in St. Joseph to-day on a mission that proves my words. He takes his niece to a convent in St. Louis. She is an orphan; he pays for everything."

"And why should he not, and she his niece?" said Kildare. "What kind of a man is it at all that takes credit, and he rich, for giving a bit of help to his own flesh and blood?"

"I will admit he does not give it readily," said Pedro Marquez. "Far from it, indeed. He grudges every dollar. Nevertheless, he gives them, and so the matter must be claimed for him. And the *señorita* is a beautiful girl," added Pedro; "just fifteen, and as fair as any girl I've ever seen. He should be grateful and pleased to have her upbringing in charge."

"Now, God save you, Pedro Marquez!" said the Celt, and he slapped the Spaniard on the broad back. "Those are the good words, entirely! 'Tis the way a father should think about a child. 'Grateful and pleased to have her upbringing in charge,' says you!" Kildare smiled his approval. "'Tis a pity you are not a man of family yourself. Daughters, and sons as well, would get the fine care from you."

JUST then the door of the public room opened and some people came in. One was Rayon; some others, evidently Europeans newly come to that region, looked curiously about. Among them was the dark-eyed girl from the gambling-house. At sight of Kildare she smiled and nodded. Her hair was thick, rich and glossily black; the parting of her red lips showed her white, perfect teeth, her eyes were lustrous and inviting.

"A jade!" said Pedro Marquez. "A woman of little name! A brazen hussy!"

"But handsome, Pedro," said Kildare. "Did you ever see such feet and ankles on born woman before? And see to her hands! Her ears are like small shells."

"She is French," said the Spaniard. "And she's well known in all the border towns. There is no one who can handle cards like her. She is of the devil, I think, for they do what she bids them. In flush times she'll fleece a hundred men in a week. She'll not leave them a coin for a morsel of bread."

Kildare laughed. The Europeans had

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settled themselves near a window; evidently they were to have breakfast. The girl continued to look his way, the smile still on her lips; he noticed this, amused, his interest growing.

"To cheat a hundred men must be like taking the hides from that many jackasses," said he. "A lady like that one, Pedro, must not be left to control herself; she needs a strong hand. She is like a blooded horse; to win her respect you must show yourself her master."

"Who shall master Thérèse Reuchard?" asked Pedro Marquez, lifting his brows. "She is like fire, *señor;* she destroys, only."

"Why, now, Pedro, you rouse my interest." Kildare looked across the room with level eyes; catching the flashing glance of Thérèse Reuchard he bowed and smiled. "God bless me! But an untamed vixen like that takes my attention, so she do. I've seen her like before, my bold, fat friend. More than once have I. They do destroy, Pedro, but only those who give them their way." He was still gazing at the girl, who was now animatedly talking with one of the Europeans. "This one have plenty of divilment in her. I can see that. Do you doubt I could tame her, now? Do you think she could use me as she's used the others, Pedro, and me with my eyes open wide?"

The fat Spaniard saw a laughing spirit of adventure in the young man's good-looking face, and he shook his head.

"Be advised, my friend," he said. "To venture where she is, is to tempt regret. She smiles at you; so take care. Thérèse Reuchard does not waste her smiles. Each of them has a meaning, and it is a meaning that is seldom good."

"Arrah, then, Pedro, 'tis an old man you are to talk like that! You are afraid of trouble; you dread what might pop out upon you from a dark corner of the future. Sure no man ever got along in the world with such thoughts as that in his mind."

Thérèse Reuchard now spoke to Rayon; the man answered briefly, and in a moment the girl rose. Kildare knew instinctively that whatever it was that had been said it concerned him, and he knew the girl meant to cross the room to speak to him. But just then came a sharp voice by the open door.

"Bear a hand, Pedro, with these bags! The train will leave in a few moments more."

The fat Spaniard agitatedly hurried away. Kildare caught a glimpse of a dry old man, sharp-faced, hard of eye; but there was another face also, that of a girl—not much more than a child. He saw two brown eyes, wistful, soft, full of gentleness, a face as fair as a flower. The image fell warmly upon his mind—and then she was gone.

He stood full of the sudden thought of her. She had been, in that brief moment, like the breath of a garden, cool, wistful, appealing. There was a thankfulness in his mind that he had seen her, and there was feeling of pain that more than likely he'd never see her again.

Then he turned. Thérèse Reuchard, brilliant-cheeked, with sidelong, luring eyes, crossed to a bench near the window where he stood. A few moments before she had been radiant, compelling; but now she had grown dim. The impulse toward her was gone. He nodded to her as he went by, and he left the place.

AND, now, time passes, and clouds rise and a tempest blows. State grapples with state; armies are shattered; fleets are destroyed; towns are taken and lost. All along the border runs the flame of war; guerillas and Indian bands kill and destroy; shock upon shock, terror follows terror; God's hand seems withered and without power. The nations of Europe lift their heads like eagles; in the distance, in the battle-smoke, their wise gray statesmen see opportunity. The thing they had foreseen had come to pass, and now plans, now ways and means, now to strip the upstart to the bones!

As the Swiss banker, Jecker, had told Louis Napoleon, Mexico could not pay the moneys she owed his subjects; since then, Juarez, president of that country, had so written it down. Not only could Mexico not pay the French money; she could not pay *any* money. Juarez was warned; but he could only repeat the statement of his country's bankruptcy and stand stolidly waiting.

As such things go, he had not long to wait. Maximilian, an Austrian archduke, whose wife was daughter to the King of the Belgians, was fixed upon as the proper man to

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crown as Emperor of Mexico. And so across the seas he was sent; and a French army was sent with him, with frigates and artillery and banners. Vera Cruz fell quickly; with less speed and many deaths, Mexico City was taken, Juarez was driven to the hills by the Europeans. The United States protested; but no heed was given to her words. The French emperor knew the hands of the republic were tied as far as his adventure was concerned. America had all she could do to fight her own Civil War, and so he proceeded to establish his power strongly.

Then in the war between the states, the heavy masses of the Federal army began to use their full weight; courageous, but worn, the Confederates tried to meet the shock, but they broke, and Lee surrendered. With the battle-smoke lifting, Grant turned his eyes toward the Rio Grande, and declared that the rebellion would never be over while a Europe-made government possessed Mexico and defied the doctrine laid down by President Monroe. The shouts of victory were still ringing north of Mason and Dixon's Line when a heavy blue army under that grim cavalry leader, Sheridan, entered Texas and halted at the Rio Grande. And there it stood, awaiting further orders.

MEN part; many things happen, and the same men meet again. And the conditions of the parting and meeting are often oddly alike, as we shall see.

The Texas dusk was thickening along the Rio Grande. Through the drum of a mustang's hoofs, a rollicking voice rang out:

"Oh, Brian O'Lynn had no britches to wear
So he got him a sheepskin to make him a pair.
'With the skinny side out
And the woolly side in,
They'll be nice, light and warm,' said Brian O'Lynn."

Through the dusk and the heat came a hard-bitten cayuse, his hoofs beating a sort of time to the lilt. The rider swayed with each motion, much as a tree-top sways in the wind.

"Well, Pepper," spoke the horseman to his steed, "it's plain by the way you wiggle the two ears of you that you like the music. And why shouldn't you, for very good music it is. But 'tis a pity you are only a horse, and so can't get the philosophy that's in the words. The hero of the ballad was not only an optimist but a man of resource as well. Listen to me, now, and I'll prove what I'm telling you."

Thereupon the song was taken up once more.

"Now Brian O'Lynn had no watch by his side,
So he got a flat turnip, scooped out the inside.
A neat little cricket
He quick slipped within.
'They'll think it's a-tickin'!' said Brian O'Lynn."

Clump — clump — clumpity — clump! sounded the small brisk hoofs of Pepper. Then suddenly, his rider threw him back upon his haunches; a heavy Colt leaped from its holster and swept the trail.

"Steady there!" The rollicking good humor left Tom Kildare's voice; it was now cold and hard. "Stand just as you are!"

There was a scrambling of ungainly hoofs and a panting of breath from the dusk.

"Accursed beast!" wheezed a voice ahead. "Brute of the devil! Would you have my death upon you? Stop! Do you not see the *señor's* weapon winking at me."

Two riders had lurched suddenly from the shadows and high growth. The beast thus implored was a tall mule; perched upon his ridge-like back was a very fat Spaniard who sawed away at the bit viciously. The other was a stoop-shouldered man who rode a pony and carried a long rifle. After getting his mount fairly well under control, the fat man held up one reassuring hand.

"*Señor*," spoke he, "do not be alarmed. Upon no account be agitated. We are honest men and mean you no harm."

Kildare twirled the Colt by the trigger-guard; a pleased recollection was in the chuckle that escaped him.

"Now, praise be!" said he. "Do my two eyes deceive me or is this honest Pedro Marquez?"

The fat man exclaimed in the semi-darkness.

"I know that voice," declared he. "I know it, though it is five years since I heard it last. It is Señor Kildare who rode with the wagon trains to Santa Fé."

Kildare urged his mustang to the side of the mule, and the two men shook hands.

"And, Pedro, what took you all this time? Divil a whisper have I heard of you anywhere."

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The fat Spaniard grunted.

"I have been with Señor Prentiss in his operations," he said. "He had a rich contract to supply certain portions of the Confederate army with food. I am still with him, though now he operates from Mexico City and his work is with the troops of the new empire."

Kildare laughed.

"Faith, then, he's like a cat. Always landing on his feet. He must be the cunning old villain, entirely."

"And you, *señor*," spoke Pedro Marquez. "Where were you during all this time of fighting?" He laughed suddenly, and his great bulk shook. "In the thick of it, I know. In the very thick of it, where all the mad Irish would be."

"I've seen my share of the divilment, friend Pedro," said Kildare soberly. "And by the looks of things on this border, I'm to see more of it before I'm done."

"You are still in the army, then?" said the fat man.

"Yes," said Kildare; "for there are some little matters still to settle, Pedro. General Sheridan has them in charge, and a few of us will stop with him until all is said and done." And then he cocked his head to one side and surveyed the two. "And do you both take warning. This is no time or place to jump your horses into a trail as you did just now. Faith, it's myself that's seen many a man spilled from his saddle for less."

The fat Spaniard nodded sadly; his face wore a grievous look, and he rolled a cigarette as he answered:

"I have an excuse, *señor*," he said. "This brute which I am riding has so dulled my mind and lamed my arms that I'm not altogether myself. Of all the malicious devils, *señor*, in the shape of mules, this is the worst! And he is so cunning in his villainy! He will select a moment—he will await an opportunity——"

Here the mule, annoyed by a persistent insect, kicked viciously; the partly constructed cigarette was scattered, and the fat man waved his pudgy fists in despair.

"Do you see?" he cried. "Is he not the fiend himself? Son of a jackass"—to the mule—"I have been famishing for that morsel of tobacco. Move but once more and I will beat you over the ugly head!"

KILDARE dropped the Colt back into its holster; and while the Spaniard resumed his preparations upon a second cigarette, the Irishman spoke to the man with the rifle.

"Heading for Fort Brown?"

But the other shook his head, and there was that about him which showed a complete lack of enthusiasm.

"No," said he, "we're counting on putting in the night at Espirito Santo."

Had the dusk been less thick, the man would have noticed a narrowing of Kildare's eyes.

"Well," spoke the Celt, "sure you have picked on a lively little spot, by all accounts."

The stoop-shouldered man agreed with this.

"She ain't none of the mildest," he said. "And what's more, I ain't hankering any after the job."

The end of the Spaniard's cigarette now glowed redly, and all three were moving slowly along the trail.

"God help us," said the fat man, as he inhaled the smoke greedily. "What are honest people to do in a place like that? If we did not have the most urgent business there, *señor*, we would never think of stopping at Espirito Santo; we'd pass it as silently as the night wind."

"A nest of cutthroats," said the stoop-shouldered man. "And it'll be worse than ever to-night—with them people from over the river."

When Kildare spoke again there was a quiet in his voice which would have attracted the attention of any one who knew him well.

"There has been a crossing from the Mexican side, then?" said he.

"European fighting men," said the Spaniard. "General Sheridan has said that they must not do it; but they snap their fingers at him."

"Why, then," observed Kildare, "divil the one of me would call that wise. There's nothing the general dislikes more than the snapping of any one's fingers."

"For the Confederates under Señor Kirby Smith to cross into Mexico is right," said the Spaniard. "If they'd rather join Maximilian's army than surrender to the Union force, why, that's for their own judgment to decide. But when French, and Austrian

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and Belgian fighting men cross into Texas to recruit, that is another matter."

"You think they've done that, do you?" asked Kildare.

The fat jowls of the Spaniard were brought into relief by the light from the cigarette, which was puffed agitatedly.

"*Señor*," said the man, "I am not a Mexican, but a Spaniard. Also, I am a man of business and have only honesty and good will. But, God help me, I am in much trouble!"

"What trouble, Pedro?" asked Kildare. "Are we not old friends? Do we not meet unexpectedly on the trail at night? Who knows?" And he laughed. "Maybe it is intended that I help you."

There was a note of hopeful eagerness in the fat man's voice, as he said:

"Who knows, *señor?* It may be." He hesitated for a moment, and then he asked: "Do you recall that last time I saw you—at the hotel in St. Joseph? I was there with Señor Prentiss; he was on his way to St. Louis with his niece."

Pedro Marquez was so occupied with his own thoughts that he did not note the manner of Kildare; he did not see the start, the sudden and complete attention.

"The niece!" said Kildare. "Oh, yes, Pedro; I remember."

"A beautiful girl," praised the fat man. "And kind and gentle, too. Her uncle was taking her to a convent at St. Louis where she was to be educated. During all these years of war, *señor*, she has been there. But now her schooling is done and she is on her way to Mexico City to join her uncle. Her brother is with her, and I am to meet them."

"To meet them, Pedro!" Kildare's voice had a ring of protest. "But not at Espirito Santo!"

"Yes, *señor*; they are there. They did not know what a hell-pit it was, and so have halted there for the night. And there I must go to get them."

Kildare looked grim.

"Faith, old Prentiss seems to have no more care for his niece than he had for the Confederate brigades, and they say his bad supplies poisoned most of those—bad luck to him!"

But Pedro Marquez went loyally to the defense of his employer.

"Señor Prentiss is a most successful man," said he, "and such men have many things told of them which are not true. He knows nothing of her stopping at this place. I have been waiting for them at the river, and if it had not been for Taos, here, I'd never know what delayed them." The Spaniard groaned dolefully. "We are only two," he said. "Taos is not young; I am fat and I am not a fighting man. But we are going to Espirito Santo, nevertheless, to see what has, or will, come to pass."

Kildare sat upright in his saddle.

"Faith, that's man's talk, Pedro Marquez!" cried he, and his open palm slapped the Spaniard on the back. "Fat you may be, and a fighting man you may not be; but you have the nerve, my friend, or you wouldn't have your mule's head pointed in that direction to-night."

The darkness which had followed the dusk hid the movements of the speaker; he felt for his weapons as though assuring himself that they were at hand; also he settled himself into his deep saddle, preparing for a brisk ride.

"I thought to make Fort Brown before I pulled rein," he said. "But that's a dull kind of place after dark. It hasn't half the devilment in it that Espirito Santo has. So, just by way of diversion"—and he gave another hitch to the big Colt revolver at his side—"I'll ride with you two, and have a look about me."

THERE was a short silence after Kildare's announcement; then Pedro Marquez said in an unbelieving voice:

"Do you mean it, *señor?*"

"Sure and I do so!" Kildare's voice was jovially pitched. "Am I not your friend, Pedro? And it's strange, so it is, that I didn't think of the place before; for of all the spots in this big State of Texas, Espirito Santo is the place for me to-night."

There was another silence; with one accord they all three gave their mounts free rein and went loping along the dark trail. After a space they struck off to the left, along a narrow way which led to the river's brim. This track led direct to the old mission of Espirito Santo, once solemn with bells and with a gate which had opened under the hand of a kindly *padre*. But that was long ago. Pistol-shots and drunken revelry were the things oftenest heard now, and when one entered at the

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gate, one was sure to meet the insolent, challenging stare of men outside the law.

During the war between the states, Texas had been a sort of backwater. A Confederate army, recruited within its borders and in western Louisiana, had been organized under General Kirby Smith, but it had seen no service. Not once had it felt the dread impact of the Federal assault, and so, unharmed and not really knowing what war was, it purposed, after the surrender of Lee and Johnston, to go on with the fight.

"The Confederacy still lives," declared Kirby Smith. "While the Army of Texas holds the field, the Yankees still have something to reckon with."

But the government at Washington, through many a bitter lesson, had learned to act promptly; and when Sheridan pushed into Texas, the Confederate commander was prevailed upon by cooler heads not to sacrifice his men in such an unequal manner. But he refused to surrender. To escape the Federals, his army, in squads, in companies, sometimes in whole brigades, crossed the Rio Grande into Mexico, where they were warmly welcomed by Maximilian's government as a powerful prop to that monarch's quaking throne.

But this, while it pleased the supporters of the empire, did not please Washington.

> To have an equipped and organized army of malcontents just across the border [wrote Secretary Stanton] would be a constant menace to our peace. It would be like a heap of smoldering embers; at any moment it might break into flame, and we should have the whole rebellion to fight over again.

And so the veteran army of Sheridan now guarded the fords of the Rio Grande to prevent the passage of more Confederates.

"GENERAL SHERIDAN," said fat Pedro Marquez, through the darkness, "is a great soldier. But his guard is not effective; Confederates still cross into Mexico."

"Oh, well, what matter?" said Kildare calmly. "If the general wants them badly enough, he'll go after them."

"Not across the river," said the stoop-shouldered man confidently.

"Why not?" demanded Kildare. "Sheridan usually goes after what he wants. It's a habit of his."

"But Mexico is a foreign country," protested the Spaniard. "It is, you might say, a hostile one."

"Sure it wouldn't be foreign long," Kildare chuckled. "And as for its being hostile, faith, Little Phil wouldn't mind that at all. He'd rather like it."

Pedro Marquez muttered a pious ejaculation from the ridge of the tall mule. He was filled with awe at such ideas.

"But it would be madness," stated he. "Does he not know that all Europe is behind Maximilian? France is first. She is a country of armies, and it was she who put Maximilian upon his throne. Then there is Austria. Her emperor is Maximilian's own brother. The King of the Belgians is his father-in-law."

As though he felt this must be a crushing statement, the speaker paused. But Kildare laughed.

"I shouldn't wonder if the general had considered all those little matters, Pedro," said he.

"Little!" The Spaniard's voice was filled with incredulity. "Little matters, *señor!* Why, what could be greater? Having the powers of Europe for his friends, Maximilian is not to be approached except with respect." As this got no reply from Kildare, who was looking ahead through the darkness, the fat man pressed his point. "If you, *señor*, do not see the importance of it, your government at Washington does. Has it not pleaded and threatened during the last four years to have the forces of allied Europe taken out of Mexico? And has not Europe refused?"

There was another short pause and then Pedro Marquez added:

"And the United States did no more than talk, *señor*."

"And because of that do you think she was afraid?"

"No," Pedro hastened to reply. "I'd say she had good sense. For how could your single country, *señor*, face the whole of Europe?"

For a moment Kildare did not reply; his eyes still searched the darkness ahead.

"You recall the time when Mexico was a republic," said he at length, "and when Juarez was president?"

"Surely, *señor;* it was only a few years ago."

"Faith, that Juarez was a clever fellow!" said Kildare, dryly. "He solved very difficult problems with all the ease in the world. Divil a trouble it was to him, at all.

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When he came into office, Mexico was loaded with debts. It couldn't pay. Did Juarez worry about that? Not a bit! With a stroke of the pen he canceled it all."

From the way he drew in his breath it was plain that Pedro Marquez also admired this proceeding.

"I remember," said he. "As you say, Juarez was clever. If one can't pay, why worry and bother? It's better to put an end to the debt like an honest person."

"Anyway, right or wrong," said Kildare, "that's the way Juarez looked at the matter. But others saw it differently. The governments of Europe, for instance, disliked this way of doing business, for the great bulk of Mexico's debt was owed there. France asked for the money due her subjects. But Mexico made no reply. And why was that, Pedro?"

"She felt safe," replied the Spaniard. "She felt protected. Was there not the Monroe Doctrine to hide behind? Years ago the United States had said to Europe in that doctrine 'Keep out of Mexico.' But"—and his tongue clicked pityingly—"poor Mexico was not as safe as she thought. When the time came for the United States to enforce what she had so boldly proclaimed, *was* she afraid?"

"That's a harsh question, Pedro, *asthore*," said Kildare, quietly, "and a man should make sure he has some ground before he asks it. No. She was not afraid; but Europe was cunning. It waited until we were deep in the Civil War—fighting for our very existence—with divil a spare moment to look beyond our own borders, Pedro! Then it sent fleets and armies to Mexico. Juarez was defeated and driven to the mountains."

"They have hunted him like a wolf," declared the fat Spaniard. "Then they took up this Austrian archduke, brought him over and made him emperor. I saw him once, at Vera Cruz, a tall, sad-looking young man."

"He'll probably never be any taller," observed Kildare, "but I'm afraid, if he stays at his present job, it's a deal sadder he'll grow."

"Heaven save us, there is trouble ahead for most of us!" said the fat man, his mind going to the visit to Espirito Santo. "Life seems full of vexations."

This exclamation seemed to give a new turn to the thoughts of the others; there now followed a silence. The horses continued their pace, smartly, as though they felt that a halting-place must be near.

"Lights off there," said Taos suddenly.

SURE enough, through what seemed a thick growth of trees perhaps a quarter of a mile away, some lights were faintly glimmering.

"It's the mission," said Pedro Marquez. "The direction is right, and it has trees about it, that way." Then he gave a long groan, or, rather, a series of short ones, for the jolting of his mule made sustained sound impossible. "A nest of bandits," lamented he. "What was once a holy place is now one of blood and violence. *Madre de Dios!* Shall we come out alive?"

Taos coughed. He was a silent sort of man, apparently not the sort who expressed his feelings readily. But he spoke now.

"I've heered that these foreign soldiers are a hard lot," said he.

"They are devils," moaned the fat man. "Have I not seen their work in Mexico?"

"Well, I've trapped; I've drove teams across the deserts, and I've herded steers on the range," said Taos quietly, "and in the doing of them things I've met my share of fighting men. And from those meetings I've learned one thing."

"What's that?" asked Kildare.

"That a rifle-bullet'll stop the hardest man that ever toted a gun," replied Taos, composedly; "and I reckon I've got as good an old shooting-iron here as ever was loaded."

"That's the talk," cried Kildare. "The way to meet an enemy is with your head up and your gun in your hand. Eh, Pedro?"

The fat man emitted another series of short groans; nevertheless, he kept his mule's head steadily toward the mission of Espirito Santo.

Duty and desire lie for once in the same direction and take Kildare to Mexico in the next instalment of this exceptional story. See November EVERYBODY'S—out October 15th.

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"Let me pass, John—please!" . . . "Not unless you promise me on your word to let me drive you back quietly to school."

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Dead Men Tell Tales

A Craig Kennedy Story

Craig Kennedy, Humanitarian and Scientist, Not Only Solves a Criminal Mystery, but Renders First Aid in Love and Even Checkmates Death.

By Arthur B. Reeve

Illustration by Harold Anderson

"WHAT'S your name?"

"Name?" There was a frightened, hesitating inflection in the woman's voice. "Name?" she repeated. "I—I don't know!"

"Well, where do you live?"

"Live? I don't know!"

Kennedy and I were returning from a week-end at the Jersey shore. Crossing from Staten Island to the Battery, our car was the last one on the ferry. A woman, in wild determination, had rushed out from the women's cabin, between the lines of cars, stepped over the deck-chain and squeezed through the gate. She then took a couple of steps toward the stern of the boat and stood poised over the seething wake. Kennedy vaulted from the car, slid through the gates and pulled her back.

Shouts and crowding, confusion of passengers in an instant. In it all I saw only one thing: the woman's eyes—pupils large, lustrous, a glittering pair of eyes like the Ancient Mariner's. A special officer on the boat pushed through the crowd.

"Don't know who you are! Don't know where you live! You don't know nothin' at all—huh! That's what they all say. Well, you'll have a chance to think it over at the station house. See?" Kennedy interposed. "But it was an attempted suicide, sir," growled the officer. "I must make an arrest."

Kennedy became ingratiating.

"It's amnesia. Now, you didn't see her do anything; did you, officer? I'll tell you. You summon the ambulance of the Downtown Hospital, and I'll take her there in it. What's the use of making more trouble for her? I should say she's had enough."

In the receiving room of the hospital there was still no answer to questions. Search revealed nothing but a bunch of keys. Only those glittering eyes!

Kennedy placed her in an upholstered chair and talked to her very soothingly.

"Don't fight against me. Let yourself go. Sleep!" Craig's eyes seemed to penetrate hers. "Rigid!"

She was now plainly in an hypnotic state. Kennedy moved closer a table on which was

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paper and a pencil. He placed the pencil in her hand.

"Write—now—your name!"

Slowly, in a cramped hand, she scrawled, "Hilda Hildreth."

"Now—where you live!"

The woman continued writing. "Fifth Avenue." A number.

"Are these the keys to the house?"

"Yes," she nodded.

Kennedy pricked under her thumb-nail, squeezed out a couple of drops of blood. Then he snapped his fingers sharply. The woman started—looked about, dazed.

"Put her in a private room where she can be observed, where she has absolute quiet."

Not many minutes later we pulled up before the number, a house on the Avenue in the Fifties.

I was amazed. I knew this house. This was Fifth Avenue's house of mystery. Here, surrounded by commerce, lived the wealthy Wagstaff sisters, Anna and Emma, recluses past whom flowed unnoticed the most fashionable throng in America.

The house was boarded up on the first two floors. Kennedy mounted the steps. A small wooden door with a catch-lock was closed.

"Let's see if the keys really fit."

He tried one, then another. The third opened the catch-lock of the boarding-door, disclosing the house door, which was open.

As we stepped in we could hear voices—the voices of a girl and a man.

"Let me pass, John—please! These grips are heavy."

The man was evidently blocking the stairs at the head of the first landing.

"I'm not going to let you pass, Gladys—not with those grips, nor without them unless you promise to let me drive you back quietly to Miss Kent's School."

"But——"

"No; I don't care if Sydney Talcott is waiting at the Little Church. In fact, it is just because Sydney Talcott is waiting that I insist. I think too much of you, my dear. Besides, I am really trustee of the estate. I would be false to my trust if I let such a thing happen. Some day you'll thank me for having the house watched so closely, for coming up here!"

"But, John, I never have my allowance any more. My aunts don't take care of me as they used to. I can't stay at Miss Kent's with only my tuition and board paid. I'm tired of it. I'm going——"

She flung one bag over his head down the stairs. Then the other rolled down at our feet. There was a struggle.

"Just a moment, please!" Kennedy called up at them.

"Who are you?" demanded a rather prepossessing young man.

"Who are you?"

"I? I'm John Knox Greene, attorney—Greene & Gates, who administer the Wagstaff estate. Come now; who are you? How did you get in?"

"With a key, of course."

Kennedy displayed the bunch. Gladys gave a gasp. "The key-ring! Why, that's Hilda's!"

"Hilda? Who's Hilda?"

"Hilda Hildreth, the maid my aunts have had for years—even before they began to get so—so—queer."

"Where are your aunts?"

"They've gone to a sanatorium on Staten Island—Galen Sanatorium for Nervous Diseases—to take a treatment."

GLADYS GOODWIN stood now at the foot of the stairs, holding one bag in front of her with both hands. Feet apart, hat slightly disarranged, scornfully ignoring the attorney who had been doing his best to protect and help her, she studied Craig.

Evidently the information gleaned from the look was satisfactory. Her face relaxed in a smile.

Gladys was about nineteen; slender, of medium height, color intensified by the exertion of the tussle to pass Greene, she stood in an indignant, belligerent attitude which became her.

Her hair was coiled low on her neck, and little stray curls were chasing each other over the whiteness of neck, cheek and forehead. Big blue eyes, scintillating with anger and determination, gave character to a perfectly molded face. But her mouth was made for smiles and kisses. It refused to be drawn in tight, hard lines.

Kennedy was almost fatherly in his handling of her.

"Now, Gladys," he asked, after a few minutes, "is the telephone connected?"

"I don't know."

"Well, try it. If it is, please telephone down to the rector of the Little Church that

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the wedding is postponed—at least for the present. You have your license, of course. You can marry at any time. But think it over. It's a mighty serious step."

The telephone proved to be cut off.

"Then I must go down there," continued Craig. "Greene, I'd prefer to avoid a scene. Let me take her alone. Trust me."

Greene agreed with ill grace.

IN THE rectory of the Little Church we found two men—one young, about the age of Gladys or a year older, the other his senior by perhaps ten years.

The younger, Sydney Talcott, was in a boiling rage at Greene's interference with the elopement, at Kennedy's officiousness. There was an ill-concealed resentment on the part of the older brother, Halsey Talcott, too, who growled something about the disappointment of the younger of the old aunts, Emma, who evidently liked Sydney.

"Halsey Talcott," I repeated to myself. "Are you the architect, sir?"

"Yes."

I recalled it now. There had been published in the papers an architect's drawing of a proposed new Art Center on a big block on upper Broadway. The drawing had borne Halsey Talcott's name, and Halsey Talcott was the chairman of a committee that had promoted the scheme, and was organized to secure the financing.

Then I thought of the old Wagstaff sisters. Among other pieces of property, they still owned what was left of the old Wagstaff farm, on Broadway, a whole block just below Columbus Circle—the block on which it was proposed to erect the great Art Center. The Wagstaff sisters had been reported to have refused persistently to lease the land. And Halsey Talcott was Sydney's brother!

Kennedy had won Gladys's confidence—almost. He had won a postponement, but he had one other point to put over—the school.

"But I won't go back!" she insisted, now that we were alone.

"Well, where will you go? Have you any other relatives?"

"One—a cousin. Mabel Sinclair."

I had heard of Cousin Mabel Sinclair. She was one of those masterful women. She went in for psychoanalysis and all the other isms of the mind, had capitalized them, set herself up as an "efficiency psychologist of business."

By dint of sheer persuasive personality, Craig fulfilled his trust. We drove Gladys back to Miss Kent's school, helped her with her excuses. Then it was that some part of her motive dawned on me. The holidays were coming—cheerless holidays for Gladys.

"But how had that Hilda Hildreth been affected so—and why?" I inquired, when at last we had got to Craig's laboratory.

Kennedy had lost no time in plunging into a study of the few drops of blood from the maid's finger.

"A hyoscyamin compound," he found. "The eyes gave me the first suspicion. It's a mydriatic alkaloid—like the twilight-sleep. Put an idea into one's head, awake, the very circumstances, everything is forgotten. But under the drug, in the abnormal state, it seems almost as if consciousness were retained. Yet the person is really another person." He satisfied himself that his test was correct. "Some reason for this," he considered. "Now, what?"

Craig telephoned his findings to the doctor at the hospital, and they discussed treatment. Hilda was already better.

"There's some fraud—some deed of darkness afoot!" I exclaimed, as he hung up.

I had been thinking it over. There was Hilda Hildreth, a victim of amnesia, maid to the eccentric Wagstaff sisters. There was little Gladys Goodwin, one of the heirs—now just a poor little rich girl. There was young Sydney Talcott, with an elder brother, Halsey Talcott, who desired to erect the Art Center on the big block on Broadway owned by the sisters, leasing the land for ninety-nine years. And the sisters would not lease it. I thought I saw.

"Gladys preferred going back to the hated school rather than to her cousin. Now, why?" Kennedy thought a moment. Then, "Let's look up Mabel Sinclair."

THE office studio of Mabel Sinclair was in a former hotel on Longacre Square which had been converted into a business building. The door bore her name, and under it was: "Efficiency Psychologist of Business." Craig paused, and I saw him looking at the next door. On it was; "Halsey Talcott: Architect."

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"Look!" I exclaimed. Next to that was another door, "Art Center Corporation." Then I noted that all the doors bore the legend: "Tobey's Sellers of Success."

Craig opened the door that bore Mabel's name. It was early afternoon, but she was not there. However, the door into Talcott's office was open. They were all communicating offices. Talcott was out also. Down the line we could hear voices. That must be Tobey, teaching some agents of "Sellers of Success" how to put it across.

Donald Tobey was a typical promoter, just as breezy in putting over a real-estate proposition in the guise of art as in the promotion of a new moving-picture company or in exploiting an oil-well—provided there was something to sell to the descendants of Barnum's customers.

Kennedy assumed the rôle of a "prospect," and was loaded with pamphlets.

"This proposition seems to be sound enough," he remarked, looking over a handsome prospectus. "But what about the Wagstaff block?"

"Oh, we're sitting pretty on that." Tobey smiled confidently. "I suppose you know the story of the Wagstaff family. Well, there were four daughters, no sons. The eldest married Morris Sinclair, the hotel man. There was one child, Mabel." He nodded toward the office down the line. "The youngest married Parker Goodwin, the publisher. They had one child, a girl, Gladys. The other two sisters, Anna and Emma, disliked their elder sister. But they always liked the youngest. In a joint will, drawn fifteen years or so back, they had left all to this baby, Gladys, cutting off Mabel Sinclair. But about five years ago there was a new will, dividing the estate equally between Mabel and Gladys. Now, these two old aunts are pretty feeble, minds failing rapidly and all that. Miss Sinclair has had to get them to take treatment, but I understand Dr. Putnam—you know Putnam, the great specialist?—says it is only a question of time. Oh, we've got it all sewed up."

So Mabel had been instrumental in getting the aunts to take the Putnam treatment. Mabel Sinclair and Halsey Talcott seemed pretty close, with communicating offices. Then, young Sydney Talcott and Gladys, the other heir, had been all but married that very morning. "Sewed up" and "sitting pretty" seemed right.

Was Mabel Sinclair really a schemer? What of John Knox Greene, of the law firm, Greene & Gates, attorneys for the Wagstaff estate? John was the son of the dead attorney for old Wagstaff. Was John Greene the only person who stood in the way of the scheme?

Outside, Kennedy asked:

"Why has the Broadway property never been used, sold, or leased before?"

"Maybe some cloud on the title," I hazarded.

It gave Craig an idea. Quickly he evolved a fictitious story of the title to the land that the Art Center wanted—some paper hidden by old Wagstaff in the house, known only to him. He wound up with a hint. Did an old family servant know more than was suspected?

It was my duty to get this story printed in the *Star*, with the proper display, and I didn't fail. That night it appeared with a big spread. It was good hot weather news.

"That will smoke them out," observed Kennedy. "Now, the next step is to get Hilda back, cured, to that sanatorium."

IT WAS late in the afternoon when we returned to the Down-town Hospital. Hilda was again quite herself, but her mind seemed a complete blank since the night before when she retired.

Hilda's appreciation of Kennedy's success in keeping her out of trouble showed itself by her readiness to fall in with his plans. She remembered nothing of the attempted suicide, but she felt deeply grateful that he had saved her life.

"Mr. Kennedy," she murmured, "I am troubled. Always I have been so reliable. But a month ago I don't know what came over me. I had a spell very much like this. Then it went away. I thought it was my stomach going back on me. But—it is haunting me now, this feeling that I am capable of such foolishness."

"Never mind, Hilda. Don't dwell on the past. Watch out for the future."

On the way to Staten Island she told us interesting things about the women whom she served—their strange and growing aversion to society and modern methods of business and finance.

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As we entered the ill-cared-for grounds of the sanatorium, I thought that an air of greater prosperity about the place would have attracted more patients.

An attendant greeted us. He looked sharply at Hilda, but said nothing.

"I want to see the Misses Wagstaff, please." Craig handed the attendant a card.

"Very sorry," he replied curtly, hardly looking at the card. "It's against the rules."

"Why? This is their personal maid," argued Kennedy, indicating Hilda.

"Can't help it. No one can see them until Dr. Putnam comes back."

Kennedy walked down the steps.

"I don't suppose it makes any difference if we look about—or do we need Dr. Putnam's chaperonage for that, too?" he exclaimed sarcastically to us.

We left the porch and walked down the driveway. Near the garage was a splendid view over hill and down valley to the harbor. As we stopped to admire it, we heard, complainingly:

"Well, if he don't came across soon, I'll blow this job! My family can't live on hot air!"

"Same here! Same with everybody, Steve. Owes everybody, too—besides that 'ere mortgage what he always bellyaches about when you touch him for wages——"

The workmen passed out of hearing, but toward the house now could be heard a car.

"Maybe that's Dr. Putnam," suggested Hilda, as we followed her.

We cut across a narrow path. As we crossed the porch, we could hear Dr. Putnam talking to the same attendant.

"Where are they now? Gone?"

"I left them here, Doctor. I wouldn't let them go up."

"You're sure they're not from that confounded lawyer, Greene? They didn't have any paper, did they?"

"No, Doctor. I tell you the maid, Hilda, was with them."

"You can't keep Hilda away from those old folks. She will have to stay." It was a woman's voice that broke in.

"Mabel Sinclair!" whispered Hilda to us.

"You did perfectly right in not letting strangers go up-stairs. Always a lot of busybodies snooping round a place like this. If they come back, I'll manage them."

"That's right," approved Mabel.

I wondered at the apparent intimacy between Mabel and Dr. Putnam. And what about Dr. Putnam's unconcealed hostility for, perhaps even fear of, young lawyer Greene?

Kennedy coughed, then trod along heavily on the porch. I think none of us showed that we had been eavesdropping.

There were several minutes of parley, but permission was given at last to see the sisters for five minutes.

ANNA and Emma were poor old ladies of the atrophied mid-Victorian period. They were more than just queer. I noticed, too, that either Dr. Putnam or Mabel was in ear-shot all the time.

Anna Wagstaff was the more feeble. Sitting in a big rocker, her frailness was accentuated. Evidently her mind refused to be interested in outside things. She had some wool and knitting-needles, and these she kept busy.

Emma was happy to see Hilda, who tried to make them both more comfortable, adjusting pillows and straightening locks of white hair. Once I saw a glance of keen intelligence pass between Emma and the maid. Had something happened of which Craig and I had not heard?

"How is Gladys?" asked Emma finally.

"Very well, Miss Emma."

"And Sydney?"

"All right, too, Miss Emma."

"I'll be glad to see them again. When did you see Gladys?"

"I didn't see her. Mr. Kennedy saw her."

"I should like to have told her how I feel about Sydney. He comes out here to see me once in a while—and I appreciate it—offers to help me, which is strange in young folks these days. He doesn't wait to be asked." She looked aside. "I think—if I had met a boy like Sydney when I was as young as Gladys—" She stopped, smiled, glanced at Anna, knitting, then shook her head. The thought of Gladys and Sydney seemed to afford her pleasure.

All this time Anna kept knitting and coughing. It did not seem as if she could last much longer. Dr. Putnam's information to the promoter seemed correct. Her mind was failing rapidly. Emma was not really so well, either. I gathered that

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Anna had been the dominant one. Emma was more human. Gladys liked her the better, too.

A telephone call came for the doctor and Craig snapped at the momentary privacy with a hasty question about the joint will.

The sisters made an unintelligible reply, so he turned to Hilda and repeated the question.

"Will?" she returned. "Why, there is a will—an old one, I believe—one they made fifteen years ago. It——"

"But the new one—the one made five years ago?"

Hilda shook her head.

"There is no new will—no will made five years ago."

Mabel and Dr. Putnam returned. The five minutes were up. We were not destined to get an answer that day.

IT WAS late that night when we returned to our apartment, to find that Gladys had left a letter for Kennedy at the laboratory which had been brought round to our apartment by the caretaker. Kennedy opened it:

DEAR MR. KENNEDY:

I fear that some one must want to get everything away from me. I have just received money enough to visit with a friend whose folks have a wonderful estate up in the Berkshires. The vacation starts to-night.

One of the girls had an *Evening Star* and I read something about a paper maybe hidden in the house. Sydney has warned me to keep away from the Fifth Avenue house after John interfered with my runaway match. Is this money to get me out of the way?

Just for that, I'm not going on my vacation—yet. GLADYS GOODWIN.

Craig exclaimed:

"She's just the kind! If she is warned away from a thing, that's the very thing she wants to do—and does. We go!"

At the old house again, in the middle of the night, we let ourselves in quietly, closed the door—listened.

There was a noise! On rubber soles and on tiptoe we crept to the library. The big safe was open, everything strewn about. We stopped. There were the sounds again. We retraced our way to the reception-room.

Craig flashed his pocket-light. There, on the floor, wriggled Gladys—bound and gagged! He released her.

"Of course I came here, Mr. Kennedy," she replied to his hurried question. "Who wouldn't? If you're young, the thing forbidden is the lure. When everybody, including Sydney, seemed so anxious for me to stay away from my own home, why, that is the time I wanted to go there most. So I came." She surveyed ruefully the cord and gag Craig had just taken off. "Let me talk. It feels good. My mouth has been held open so long that just to be able to make sounds is a change."

"I'm giving you a splendid chance, Gladys," smiled Craig. "Tell me what happened—what you ran into."

"I don't know. I came in just as I always did. I wasn't the least bit particular about keeping quiet. But then I heard some people talking. It sounded like two people in the library. I didn't go down the hall. I wanted to surprise them. So I crept into the reception-room, then on into the drawing-room. I peeked into the library. But I couldn't see any one. I saw the safe door open, though, and the desk drawers open, the furniture all moved, books out of the bookcases. It wasn't right. I went in to see if anything had been taken. I was just going to get up from looking at things when something heavy hit my head—heavy and hard. I didn't know anything more until I came to in this reception-room. By that time everything was quiet. The burglars must have gone. And here I am with an aching head!"

That was all that night. We put Gladys up at one of the women's hotels. But in the morning she came to us, this time in dire perplexity. She had gone up to the school, and Sydney had been up there bright and early to see her. Sydney had said that he had word that Aunt Anna was dying, sent to him by Aunt Emma—that Aunt Emma urged her: "Marry Sydney right away. Don't marry John Greene."

"And then," she cried, "already, in my morning mail, there was a letter from John. It told me that there was something mighty suspicious about the Talcotts, Sydney and Halsey—and maybe Mabel, too!" Gladys was evidently frightened. She did not know whether her own heart was telling her truly about Sydney. "Mr. Kennedy," she appealed, "what shall I do?"

The telephone-bell in the laboratory rang loudly. It was Mabel Sinclair, so excited that I had no chance to tell her who I was.

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"Mr. Kennedy," she cried, "I've been the victim of a cruel hoax! Come over, right away, to the sanatorium. . . . Oh, you're not Mr. Kennedy? Please—get him! . . . Oh—is Gladys there? Tell—Please bring Gladys over, too. Don't let her come alone! Oh——"

Craig took the receiver, and I thought of the elder aunt who had been getting worse, of the other, for whom Sydney had been doing some service. What did it mean?

Kennedy turned from the telephone. There was no use trying to break the news gently to Gladys by his side. She knew.

"Your Aunt Anna is dead; Aunt Emma is worse—the shock, you know. Hilda is gone again, too."

Gladys faced him white, startled.

"What shall I do?" she asked helplessly. "Where's John?"

"Over there. Halsey Talcott is there, too. Call up Sydney. Get him to come over right away. Tell him—oh, tell him you'll do as your Aunt Emma wants—marry him—anything." Kennedy scowled as she took the receiver tremulously. "We'll give Greene his chance to explain that letter."

Kennedy hustled us out into the car, and we were off.

"Aunt Anna dead; Aunt Emma dying," repeated Gladys mechanically. "But Mabel—Mabel never seemed to care for me before. It's strange. What can she want to tell me?"

"She said she wouldn't dare say over the wire," replied Kennedy, "that we must hurry over!"

I was thinking as we drove to the ferry of the second attack on the maid, some new peril for poor Hilda. Was the sanatorium really a house of hypnotism? They treated these by suggestion. There is good suggestion; but there is also evil suggestion. I had heard of psychoanalysis driving people to crime.

DR. PUTNAM'S greeting was a bit more affable than when we visited the sanatorium the day before.

"Am I too late, Doctor? Is she still alive? Dear Aunt Emma! Let me go to her right away." Tears trembled on Gladys's lashes as she followed the doctor.

We passed the room death had entered, followed the doctor to Aunt Emma's bedside. It was true; we had barely come in time. Gladys took the thin white hand and held it lovingly.

"Do you know me?"

A poor little smile flitted over the wan, worn face.

"Gladys!" It was just a whisper. The large eyes opened. The dying woman tried to say something. It was too much for her departing strength. "Child — don't—" There was no more. Aunt Emma lapsed into that blessed unconsciousness preceding the end.

The nurse gently put her arm about Gladys, drew her away a bit.

"What have they done about Hilda?" asked Craig. "Do they know where she went?"

Dr. Putnam shook his head. "She has wandered off somewhere. They are looking for her now."

"Whom do you mean by 'they'?"

"Miss Sinclair has gone along the shore one way, Halsey Talcott the other, and Mr. Greene is covering the ferries."

There were voices in the hall.

"But I must see Miss Goodwin, I tell you! She telephoned me."

Gladys raised her head at the voice. It was Sydney Talcott. He came forward, took her arm, murmured a few words of sympathy. Gladys hardly knew what to do. She wanted to trust Sydney. But she knew things that had happened in the last few hours that seemed very queer. She strove to give him the benefit of the doubt.

Putnam's attendant sped down the hall.

"The police—found Hilda—wandering among the hills—south!" he exclaimed. "They're bringing her in now!"

Halsey Talcott had come in from his unsuccessful search only a few seconds before the police automobile arrived. And now Hilda, in a daze, was led in. Kennedy refused to let any one but him attend her.

"Hilda"—he had settled her quietly in a big chair—"was there another will?"

"Yes. I witnessed it!" She appeared to be almost hypnotized.

"When?"

"A month ago."

"A month ago!" exclaimed Kennedy. "I thought the will was dated five years ago?" She shook her head. "But a month ago," insisted Kennedy, "they were incompetent to make a valid will."

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Hilda laughed unnaturally.

"They disliked their eldest sister, the mother of Mabel Sinclair, and cut her off. They liked the youngest sister, the mother of Gladys Goodwin. They gave all to Gladys. Then the will was changed. But it had to be dated five years back to be legal. I was called in. I knew—but—" She went off into another laugh of hollow mockery.

There was the sound of a car outside, and a call for Dr. Putnam. Kennedy followed the doctor. Sydney and I turned from Gladys and Hilda. I felt sorry for Gladys. Here were those who had mothered her from baby days passing out; Hilda, who had loved her, also failing; a lover of whom she was now uncertain. It was staggering for the girl. She followed Craig pitifully. It seemed as if she had matured unnaturally in the last two days.

"Hello, Doc! I couldn't find her. She hasn't been on any ferry. Is Talcott back? Or Mabel?" John Greene did not wait for an answer. "Where shall I go next?"

Kennedy interrupted.

"In there. The police found her and brought her back."

"Good! How is she?"

"All right physically. Spinning, mentally."

"What ails everybody? How is Miss Emma?"

"Sinking rapidly now," interposed Dr. Putnam.

Greene caught sight of Sydney's face.

"What's the matter with you, Sydney? You don't look pleased to see me. Thinking about that interrupted wedding?" He paused. "What else could I do in my position? I couldn't see a little girl with two dying aunts, the heiress to millions, rush headlong into an elopement." He jerked his head with a smile toward Kennedy. "There's your man; he stopped the wedding, really. Gladys wouldn't have listened to me."

"Well, you started it. You won't interrupt the next one."

Greene seemed to grip himself.

"Don't you think," he said quietly, "you could pick a better time and place for a fight, Talcott?"

Sydney did not answer, but his face flushed. Before the encounter could get out of hand, the telephone bell rang. Craig took the call before Putnam could get to it.

"It's from the county hospital," he said, facing us as he set the instrument down. "Mabel Sinclair is dead—drowned—in the bay. The hospital had a call from a drug store down there for an ambulance and sent a pulmotor. Come; we had better all go."

It was almost too much for Gladys.

"Then we shall never know what it was Mabel was going to tell!" she exclaimed. "Mr. Kennedy," she murmured, as we all piled into the cars, "why must all my people go at once? Please hurry. Maybe they can do something with the pulmotor."

There flashed through my mind only the idea of suicide. Was it confession?

IT WAS not much of a ride, and we drew up before the drug store on the Shore Road where already were the ambulance and the doctor.

The pulmotor had already been used, but it had failed. The young doctor told of massaging the heart.

"But it was useless, too," he whispered to Kennedy. "She's dead all right!"

Back of the prescription counter Gladys dropped into a chair. On either side were Greene and Sydney Talcott. She was sobbing violently.

Kennedy was too engrossed to heed them. His thoughts were concentrated on Mabel Sinclair and the questions he was asking about the length of time since she had been found off the old pier.

"Bring me a good syringe and a thin needle, about eight centimeters long," he nodded to the druggist. "And about a cubic centimeter of a one to one-thousandth solution of epinephrin. I'm depending on the solution to be fresh and potent."

The druggist handed him a new, long hypodermic needle, then the epinephrin.

"We hear a great deal nowadays about the glands, the endocrine glands," said Kennedy, proceeding quickly with his sterilizing and antiseptic preparations. "One gland that has a striking influence on the chemical overturn in the body is the central, or medullary, portion of the adrenal. This gland produces a substance which has the extraordinary property of mimicking in the various organs all the changes that are exhibited in great emotional excitement—epinephrin, adrenin, adrenalin, various

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names for much the same drug." He bent over the silent, cold form of Mabel.

Craig made a puncture in the fourth intercostal space, about two finger-breadths from the left border of the sternum, a little inward from the left border of the relative heart dulness.

As Craig pushed the needle in, Gladys jumped up quickly with a shrill cry.

"Look! What is he doing? She can't live now!"

Without looking up, Craig muttered,

"Please—Gladys!"

He pressed down on a plunger, then withdrew the needle carefully, with a nod to the ambulance surgeon.

The young doctor placed his stethoscope on Mabel, passed it to Kennedy. A moment later Kennedy passed it to me.

"Heart-beats!" I exclaimed, awed as if in the presence of a miracle.

Kennedy nodded.

"When this substance is injected into the veins, even in extremely minute amount, it stops the activity of the digestive organs, drives the blood away from the abdomen into the brain, the heart and the muscles. It raises blood-pressure in the arteries, dilates the small bronchioles in the lungs, sets free sugar from the liver, increases clotting of blood, and in the case of muscular fatigue quickly renders the tired muscles capable of responding to a call upon them for more work. Together with the part of the nervous system which springs into action at times of great fear or anger, this medulla of the adrenal—and hence this drug—helps to render the body more efficient in physical struggle, mobilizes the body-forces for special heroic effort during a critical emergency. If it does this when injected into normal veins, what may it not do if injected into the heart itself, even when it has ceased to beat?"

The face of the young surgeon clouded. The heart had stopped.

Calmly Kennedy prepared another injection. Again the heart started. Craig held a small mirror at the nose, the mouth. There was no moisture on the mirror. The lungs were not working. The heart stopped again.

In her excitement, Gladys had forgotten Sydney and Greene. Leaning forward, quiet after Craig's stern call for silence, she watched—fascinated. She had thrilled at the look of hope on Craig's face, and fell back disappointed now, when the mirror showed no moisture.

A third time Craig prepared the needle.

"I'd recommend," he said talking to the young surgeon, "that this method be made widely known and that physicians learn it as part of their training, so that they can perform this operation swiftly and satisfactorily. But you must always remember that the instances when it can be used are rare indeed. If there has been wearing-away of tissues, toxic action by overwhelming doses of bacterial or metallic poisons, destruction of masses of vital organs, it would be cruel and futile to rouse false hopes. That would be gross sensationalism."

He gave the third injection. Gladys stiffened and held her hands over her face, peeping through her fingers. Her lips moved tremulously. I could see that over and over she was softly breathing a prayer. Halsey Talcott seemed even more distressed. He paced the drug store, back and forth, saying nothing.

"Now try your pulmotor, doctor. Give the lungs just that little start!"

The heart was pulsating now momentarily. The air, the oxygen from the pulmotor caused the chest to rise and fall.

Craig waved gently. The pulmotor was withdrawn. The lungs now inflated, deflated. The heart continued beating.

"She is alive!" Gladys was now indulging in a moderate case of hysteria of relief. In her joy she grasped my hand and held it.

Kennedy turned to Hilda, who had been brought along with us. Her eyes were getting more normal.

"I don't want her to come out yet!" he exclaimed. Then, to the druggist, "Have you just a little hyoscyamin in the shop?"

A FEW moments later her eyes were dilating again. She seemed to be recollecting what had taken place back at the sanatorium.

"Hilda"—Craig spoke sharply—"now tell me about that will a month ago. You knew the sisters were not competent to make a legal will. Why did you witness it?"

"He made me! I don't know—I couldn't help it. I felt strange—the way I do now. I can't help answering your questions.

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But I don't want to. He made me sign it. . . . ."

I saw Dr. Putnam moving slowly toward the door, but Craig did not move. The door had been locked.

Passing her hand wearily over her forehead, Hilda moaned:

"He tried to kill me. I know now. I complained about feeling tired. 'I'll have a fine tonic for you to take,' he said. It all comes back to me now. I felt strange each time and I seemed to forget about it."

Kennedy had been preparing an antidote. He now gave it to Hilda.

"Don't worry any more, Hilda. You'll not need any of that tonic in the future. You know your enemies. That is enough."

"You dear old Hilda!" Gladys had come over to her. "You'll come home with me—let me take care of you. You need rest."

The maid put out her hand.

"It is such a comfort, Miss Gladys, to think I am not going crazy, too."

Gladys faced Putnam.

"All I know is that I'm sorry my aunts ever spent a night under your roof."

Putnam, at the locked door, had turned face to face now with Greene.

"You held the mortgage," he growled. "It was overdue. I did what I had to."

"What's your mortgage compared to Hilda's life?" The cheeks of Gladys were blazing, her eyes snapping.

"Gladys!"

We started. There was an inarticulate cry from Mabel. I looked at her strangely. There was no recollection of another world. She was very much of this world.

She tried to raise herself, tried to point.

"Aunt Emma told me—yes—he did it—first the will, the fake— Then he made me go help him open the safe—search—after that thing in the *Star*. Gladys, if you would have married him, he would have got rid of me, got all. You wouldn't!" I saw that Mabel was feebly pointing at John Greene. "But I knew too much—this morning. So did Hilda—about the will!"

Hilda suddenly seemed to break into a saner recollection, as if her two personalities were merging.

"Yes; he made me sign it. Yesterday, with the doctor, he told me to go down to the ferry—jump off. To-day he told me to go to South Beach, out on the pier——"

John Knox Greene was standing with his back to a desk. As Craig's injections of epinephrin had been taking effect in the dramatic awakening of the dead, Greene had been acquiring a livid, deathly pallor. It seemed almost as if the glow on Mabel's cheeks was being taken from his own.

"Then, this morning, he didn't go to the ferry. He went with me—out on the dock—I can't swim. He shoved me off. If I drowned—it would cover the whole thing."

"Sydney!" Gladys put out her hand impulsively, a happy smile on her face. "I'm so glad, Sydney—it wasn't—Halsey!"

Sydney smiled as he drew her to him.

"You know, Gladys, you're leaning against that license—in my breast-pocket, dear!"

"I need you—Sydney!" She caught sight now of Mabel, lying on the blankets of the stretcher from the ambulance, and dropped on her knees beside her. "Mabel!" She bent over and kissed her forehead. "Mabel, I know the old will stands—but you're not cut off. That block—I'll lease it to you. You and Halsey shall build your Art Center!"

In her weakness, Mabel smiled bravely up at Halsey Talcott now, standing beside his brother.

"Greene," interrupted Craig, "you faked a will, sought to get them all out of the way, first the nurse, then the sisters. You would have married Gladys; if not, you would have taken away half her inheritance, made terms with Mabel—if Mabel had been that kind to make terms. You wanted the girl and the fortune. Well, this needle may have saved you from the chair, but you'll have a good many years to meditate on other charges!"

The nerves in Greene's face were twitching violently. His eyes were shifting. He was trying hard to control himself. It seemed strange to me that the man made no futile dash for liberty. Most of them do.

He took his handkerchief from his pocket and passed it over his face, bent forward, a glint of desperation in her eyes.

"You've pulled Mabel back—but you'll have to go—to hell—if you're going to pull me back!"

He crumpled in a heap on the floor, and I saw that when he had pulled out his handkerchief he had also taken from his pocket a now empty paper of some cyanide powder.

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The Double Code

Sitting in Judgment is a Far Too Common Human Indulgence. A Striking Story Which Will Make You Ask Yourself, "Are My Own Hands Clean Enough for Me to Judge Another?"

By I. A. R. Wylie

Illustration by Joseph A. Maturo

"WE'VE got to hope," the woman said with a note of defiance in her quiet voice. "To be sure of success is to win the first skirmish and we've got to help Denis even with our thoughts. I won't think of failure."

She went across the room and pushed aside the curtain. Down below in the valley she could see the lights of the town and beyond against the slope of the pine-covered hills, a dimly suggested building, ghost-like in the dusk, its gray immensity pricked out with gay, illuminated windows.

She smiled proudly to herself. "It will be as Denis says," she went on. "People will come to Beachtown, first in their dozens and then in their hundreds. They will come incredulous and despairing and they will go home healed and believing. Denis is so certain. There are no waters in the world to compare with his spring. And it's not as though he was the only one who was so sure. Every one in Beachtown believes in him and in his discovery. Even little Miss James has put all her savings into the company and Mr. Baillie and—and every one who counts. They say the clever young doctor is to make Beachtown. We say so too, don't we? And perhaps we, who love him best, count most." She glanced back over her shoulder. "Don't we?"

The old woman by the fireside did not move or look at her. She was very old, but of the two she seemed the more virile. She sat up, stiffly erect, disdaining the easy-backed chair, her mouth tight-set, her eyes from under the arched black brows fixed relentlessly on the firelight. One thin hand was outstretched and gripped the Malacca cane with a strength that made the knuckles stand out like polished ivory. The younger woman came back and stood opposite her, her elbow on the mantelshelf, the girlish, over-delicate face supported in her hand.

"I think you, more than any one, ought to find it easy to believe," she said gently.

Mrs. Denborough glanced up.

"Why?" she asked.

"Once—a long time ago—you and all Beachtown misjudged some one—some one you loved—and afterwards it was proved that he had been innocent all through. You were never able to atone. If that ever happened to me I should never dare disbelieve any one again."

"That was my son." The old woman smiled grimly to herself. "Mothers are privileged—to forgive or withhold forgiveness."

"But never to withhold justice."

"You are sentimental, Alice."

Denis Milroy's wife crimsoned faintly, then she shook her fair head as though throwing off a momentary folly and bending down kissed the white sunken cheek.

"It's Christmas time, so I suppose you are trying your best to be hard," she said lightly. "You are always trying to be hard, aren't you, mother, trying to cover up each kindness that you do with a cold word. Outsiders never understand how such a harsh old woman came to adopt a poor orphaned baby and bring it up at such cost.

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Only I and perhaps Denis understand."

"Do you understand, my dear?"

Alice Milroy nodded gravely.

"When Denis asked me to be his wife he told me—what you had done for him—all you had been to him. It had always seemed strange to me that women can adopt other women's children—in your case it meant a hard, bitter struggle, didn't it? But when I heard everything I guessed."

"What did you guess?"

"That it was your way—to atonement."

Mrs. Denborough's face remained expressionless.

"You are a discerning child, Alice. Children tumble occasionally headlong into the truth. Isn't that your husband's step?"

"It's too early. The board meeting began at three. If only they make Denis chairman——"

"They will. Beachtown has just business capacity enough to know that it has none. If this enterprise is going to succeed it will only do so with Denis at the head. They know that and they are too deeply involved to run risks. Trust them to thrust the weight of responsibility on some one else's shoulders. I know them."

Her laugh was caustic enough but this time Alice Milroy joined in lightheartedly.

"I believe you're right. They feel that Denis is the man to see the thing through. And he will. Even if he didn't I should still be proud. It's been the bravest fight ever a man waged—oh, Denis!"

Her tone had changed so abruptly that the old woman looked up from her inscrutable study of the firelight. The door had opened and a man stood on the threshold. At first glance he seemed middle-aged. The shadows at the far end of the room accentuated the hollows under his eyes; there was something gaunt and harassed in the outline of a face which might have been pleasing and almost handsome. Only as he took a quick step forward was it to be seen that he was still young and possessed of youth's impulse and elastic vigor.

"I didn't mean to startle you," he said. "I came a little earlier than I thought possible. Something unexpected happened——"

HIS wife met him half-way across the room and he caught her in his arms with the sudden passion that can be equally the expression of despair or intense relief. There was altogether something in his manner that seemed to frighten her--a smothered excitement partly triumphant and partly anxious. She drew back from him, and looked up into his flushed face.

"What has happened?"

"Nothing—at least nothing unfortunate. The company is safely floated. The shares have been subscribed for twice over. All Beachtown is in with us for better or worse."

"And you?" she asked breathlessly.

"I am managing director and medical superintendent at the new Sanatorium. It went like clock-work. It was put to the vote and it was carried unanimously. I couldn't have hoped for more."

"You couldn't have hoped for less," she retorted fervently. "You have made everything—risked everything. They owe you every hope of the future. What was Beachtown till you discovered the spring, and worked in the face of ridicule and incredulity? You fought this battle for them, and they are just helping to reap the victory."

"I don't mind that. It was a little for Beachtown and a little for the whole world——"

"And a little for me?" she interrupted, smiling up at him.

"A great deal for you. You fought with me—both of you." He took her hands from his shoulders and kissed them reverently. "Women bear the worst brunt of the battle. You've shared the bad days with me, you loyal comrade. Pray God the good days are in sight now for us all."

She made no answer but her eyes shone in unfaltering hope through the sudden rush of tears; and with a quick-drawn sigh he turned from her and crossed to the still, motionless figure by the fireside. There he stood for an instant with his hand resting on the back of her chair.

"I have a letter for you, mother," he said.

"From whom," she asked.

"From Andrew."

"My son? Give it me."

He hesitated. There was no change in her voice or manner. Save that she had drawn herself up more stiffly there was no sign that the dead had risen. She took the sealed envelop from his hand and laid it unopened on her knee.

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"There is no stamp mark," was her only comment.

"It is an enclosure. Possibly Andrew—Mr. Denborough did not wish to frighten you. He wrote to the Mayor and asked him to break the news to you. He is returning home."

"Ah!"

Denis Milroy looked down questioningly at the wizened, unmoved face and marveled. His own tone, in spite of himself, was tinged with awe and suppressed excitement.

"He is returning home a great man," he said. "He has worked hard through all these silent years and he has made his millions. You have cause to be more than proud—mother."

The last word came hesitatingly, with an effort, and Mrs. Denborough turned and laid her thin hand on his. For the first time her features expressed something, a deep, yet sternly controlled emotion.

"Things remain as they are and were, Denis," she said. "They will never change."

"I believed that," he returned gravely. "But even if you had felt different I should have understood. It is your son. He will come back to take his rightful place here and in your life. I have had my share." He felt his wife's hand slip into his and his voice steadied. "The Mayor and I talked things over," he went on. "Of course I am too young to know what happened, but I understand that Beachtown owes Mr. Denborough reparation for a serious wrong. Mr. Baillie—all the older generation—feel that nothing too much can be done to express their regret for their share in the past. There will be a deputation of the chief town folk to receive him and a banquet in his honor. Mr. Baillie hoped that you would be strong enough to be there——"

He broke off into a startled silence. Mrs. Denborough had risen to her feet. Deliberately she tossed the unopened letter into the fire.

"By all means have your deputation," she said. "Give him his banquet. I shall not be there."

"You mean—you wish to see him first alone——"

"I shall not receive him."

Husband and wife exchanged a swift glance of interrogation. Alice Milroy put her arm tenderly about the bent shoulders.

"Mother—you don't understand—Andrew, your son, is coming home. He went away years ago because you thought he had done something dishonorable. There was trouble about a check, don't you remember, and no one would believe him. And then afterward you found out how wrong you had all been. And now he is coming home great and rich and we've got to make it up to him—you most of all. Your distrust must have hurt most."

The old sunken eyes rested for an instant on the eager, young face, and passed on to the man beside her. A cold, rather ironic smile lit up their gray intentness.

"It's as if Providence had intervened," Denis Milroy said. "That Mr. Denborough should come home now, in the nick of time, it's almost dramatic."

"Quite dramatic." The smile passed from her eyes to the lips which curled perceptibly. "Mr. Denborough's name will look well on a prospectus. And a few extra thousand is just what Beachtown wanted. By all means kill the fatted calf. Only I do not wish to see my son."

"Mother, don't you realize, he was innocent——"

"I have no more to say."

"Surely it is least hard for you, his mother, to admit a wrong done. Surely you will be glad——"

She had walked painfully to the door, her stick tapping an unmoved accompaniment to her steps, and there she turned for an instant and looked back at them.

"I am an old woman, Denis," she said sternly. "I have atoned for my sins and for the sins of others. Leave me my peace."

She went out and the door closed sharply after her. Alice Milroy clung to her husband's arm. There were tears on her cheeks.

"She doesn't understand," she exclaimed. "The shock was too much. She is so old, Denis. She can remember nothing but the imagined crime. And it will break his heart."

Milroy nodded.

"We'll have to make good," he said. "We'll have to make it up to him, you and I together."

JOHN BAILLIE, recently acclaimed Mayor of Beachtown, spread himself largely before the fire. It seemed to him that his whole life culminated in this great hour. The evening clothes, worn for the second

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time in the course of a long career, were symbolic of his future. The costly flowers which filled the large old-fashioned room, the lavish display of lights and silver represented what was to come to Beachtown under his far-sighted administration. Beachtown was awake—Beachtown was to step out of her obscurity and take her place in the world. And it was he who had awakened her. He set his heavy shoulders against the mantelpiece and frowned portentously at the ceiling. Quite naturally and smoothly his thoughts wandered to the market place. It was an admirable spot for a statue. He saw himself distinctly with one hand resting on an ivory pedestal, the other outstretched in an attitude of fearless encouragement, and underneath, perhaps on the pedestal itself, the words "To the memory of Beachtown's Benefactor."

Opposite him, in a pose of ostentatious ease was Jeremy Hathers, Beachtown's premier green-grocer. In the last month he had been made town councilor and the fact added somehow to Baillie's deepening content with life. For the two men had started their race to glory in the selfsame year, in the selfsame dry-goods store, and one was a Mayor and the other only town councilor. Had Jeremy Hathers sunk into utter nothingness the contrast would have been more poignant but less delicately flattering.

There were ten other guests in the room. A representative group. Not one of Beachtown's important men had been omitted. The young doctor who had made the discovery of the healing spring was the only one who might in any way be regarded as an alien. No one knew very much about him. He came down once a year to see Mrs. Denborough and it was understood that he stood to her in the light of an adopted son, but he lived and worked and had married in London and there was a vague feeling of resentment that a comparative stranger should have muddled himself up in the town's affairs, even for its advantage. The feeling expressed itself variously.

"It's lucky, young man, that you found wide-awake folk like us to back you up," Hathers was saying. "I know a good many places where they'd have let you argue yourself black in the face and not have lifted a finger. But I saw your point at once, didn't I, Baillie?"

"There was never a moment's doubt in my mind," the Mayor returned solemnly.

Denis Milroy bowed.

"The success of the whole scheme is in your hands," he said.

HE SPOKE gravely and if there was a line of bitterness about his mouth it was caused less by the unconscious slight than by a growing sense of his discomfort. He felt out of place. The men who surrounded him were middle-aged. They knew their host, had been intimately if painfully connected with his past. He was out of it. And it was not only that. There seemed to him something oppressive, stifling, in the over-decorated room.

John Baillie's voice rose above the subdued conversation.

"Andrew Denborough was always a man of refinement," he said. "Now I come to think of it, he was perfectly right to refuse to meet the deputation. It would have been painful for himself and for all of us. He showed delicacy, too, in choosing to receive us on his own ground, as it were. Yes, that was delicate and, at the same time, dignified. I understand his motives perfectly. Mr. Denborough is a gentleman."

"And a millionaire," put in some one. The remark passed as a joke with a subtle *sous-entendu* for business appreciation, and they laughed. Only Jeremy Hathers fidgeted nervously.

"A queer thing, that about Mrs. Dentsborough," he said. "One would have thought she'd have rushed to see him. I don't understand it."

"Mrs. Denborough is getting old," the Mayor retorted. "Her mind's a bit unhinged, and no wonder. I can understand perfectly——"

"You forget——" Milroy broke in sharply.

The Mayor shrugged his shoulders.

"My dear young fellow, because you happen to be the old lady's adopted son, we can not refuse to look facts in the face. Nor is there anything derogatory in suggesting such an explanation for her extraordinary attitude. You suggested it yourself."

Denis Milroy remained silent.

"It's a queer business," Hathers went on. "Who'd have thought, thirty years ago, that we should have been receiving Andrew Denborough with all this pomp and circumstance? There wasn't much good

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said of him back in those days, was there?"

Baillie laughed.

"Yes, we made it hot for the poor devil——"

The door had opened, and the last word died on the Mayor's lips. The man who entered was recognized by them all instantly. It was not merely that they expected him—the Andrew Denborough of their youth had risen up before them with a vividness that drove the intervening years into shadow and gave to their dulled memories an undesired poignancy. There was the same truculent poise of the massive head, the same passionate deep-set eyes, the same tense-looking mouth. Only the cleft chin seemed to stand out less prominently, and there was something subtly subdued about the face, that was new. Milroy was irresistibly reminded of a torrent that, turned from its natural course, forces for itself a subterranean passage.

"Well, gentlemen?" Denborough looked from one to the other. During that brief, unsmiling inspection, no one moved. Then suddenly he laughed and held out his hand. "Hullo, Johnnie!"

The Mayor started as though he had been wakened from a deep sleep. He blinked stupidly and the next moment his own hand was outstretched and clasped in a grip that was part of the reviving past.

"Hullo, Andrew!" Yet the familiarity did not come easily. It was only when the last man had been greeted that the Mayor recovered his hold over the situation. Denborough had reached the spot where the young doctor had withdrawn, and in the abrupt cessation of his jovial recognitions, Baillie blundered forward.

"Dr. Milroy—the discoverer of the Beachtown Mineral water—Mr. Denborough."

The inevitable, square-built hand was held out. Milroy bowed over it. He did not know why—the feeling defied analysis—at the bottom of his consciousness there stirred a sullen, unreasoning resentment. His pride, his independence had been trampled upon by that proffered cordiality.

"The younger generation?" Denborough said. "Beachtown owes you a great deal, Dr. Milroy."

"I did not make the springs," Denis answered boorishly.

Denborough smiled. It was as though a clumsy young cub had tumbled over itself to his good-natured amusement.

"The discoverer is as great as the creator. Well, gentlemen, I confess to a wolfish appetite. Shall we adjourn to dinner?"

They answered him in a confused chorus. Each man in his own way was fighting his own particular form of discomfort. They had expected things to be different—how different they were not sure—either less formal or more so. They were baffled by Denborough's unchanged attitude toward them and the subtle change in the man himself. They followed sheepishly. But the room into which he led them forced an involuntary exclamation of surprise. It was literally banked with flowers. Down the center of the perfectly spread table the words "For auld lang syne" were written in pale mauve orchids. Beachtown's old-fashioned hotel had not seen such prodigality in all the days of its existence.

Denborough motioned each man to his place.

"Johnnie, you here, old fellow, at my right. I claim the privilege of sitting next Beachtown's go-ahead Mayor. You've found your seat as by instinct, Hathers. You see, I remembered your liking for the fire-side. You over there, Sanders. Dr. Milroy will you take the other end? Age and youth at opposite poles, eh? Now, gentlemen, I think we can be seated."

THEY were served by two soberly garbed footmen who fulfilled their duties silently and cunningly. Under their administration the wine flowed freely and there was a gradual thaw in the glacial restraint of the first few minutes. Hathers became nervously loquacious. He plied Denborough with questions regarding the latter's American experiences, scarcely waiting for the deliberately given answers, as though the slightest break in the conversation terrified him. The Mayor spread out his brave expanse of shirt front, and with one hand on his thigh, the other clenched on the table, nodded a ponderous approval. From time to time he glanced down the table like a general marshaling his army, and once, his glance encountering Milroy's, he smiled a solemn patronage. The young doctor's face remained expressionless. The sense of dull resentment had sharpened. All his life, his nameless youth,

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with its grinding poverty, his passionate heaven-aspiring ambitions seemed to have been dragged down to the level of this vulgar festivity. These red-faced, self-satisfied shopkeepers, fawning on the man they had cruelly wronged, filled him with a sick disgust. They had risen on the foundations of his work and now they had discarded him and the ideal which had been his inspiration. With a kind of despair he looked across at the man to whom he had come to offer what comfort, what consolation lay in his power. Andrew Denborough met the questioning gaze coldly. And then as though yielding to a long repressed impulse he leaned forward.

"How is my mother, Dr. Milroy?" he asked.

The question fell like a silencing blow on the little company. Milroy did not flinch.

"She is very well, Mr. Denborough."

"You know, I suppose, that she has refused to see me?"

"Yes."

"As her medical adviser, and, as I understand, adopted son, can you offer me any explanation for her attitude toward me?"

The sneer in the loud voice was unmistakable. An antagonism as yet vague and indefinable, began to take swift shape between them.

"I can give you no explanation," said Milroy coldly.

"Ah!" Denborough sat back. It was as though he had drawn a damaging confession from an opposing witness. On his right the Mayor fidgeted and then rose abruptly to his feet. He coughed twice, imposing silence on an already voiceless gathering.

"Mr. Denborough," he began thickly, "I know you are not the man to listen to long speeches and I am certainly not the man to make them. Action is the only language men of our caliber understand, but it seems to me that the moment has come when I, the Mayor of Beachtown and deputed spokesman for my fellow citizens, should express to you our joy in welcoming you back in our midst." He cleared his throat and then went on with a kind of desperate bonhomie. "Thirty years have passed since you left us, Mr. Denborough, to seek your fortune in the new world. In that time much has happened. We have grown older and wiser. We have seen our errors—we are prepared to acknowledge them manfully. We have lifted our native town from its obscurity into the highroad which leads to greatness, and now at this solemn season of the year it seems to us a fitting climax that you, Beachtown's greatest citizen, should return to receive from us our tokens of—of respect and of regret——"

He stumbled, conscious that the bad turning had been reached. Andrew Denborough leaned forward and pulled his old schoolfellow's sleeve.

"Do you remember the day I blacked your eye, Johnnie?" he said.

THE Mayor's jaw dropped. He looked about him blankly, then as he saw Denborough's face, he laughed uncertainly and the next instant the laugh shook the table. Denborough was the first to recover. He rose with a delightful gesture of regret.

"Gentlemen, I have to apologize. My abominable sense of humor has robbed us all of our honored friend's generous and fluent speech and it is 'up to me,' as our American friends say, to make good. Indeed, seeing all your familiar faces, I could not shut out the crowding memories of my youth, and your laugh assures me that you all forgive me. The best thing I can do to prove my repentance is to be as brief as possible. But there are one or two points which I must touch on. My pleasure at being with you again is not easily expressed, but what am I to say of my pride in the advance that my native town has made under your guidance? Gentlemen, I determined, when I had heard of all you had done, to be worthy of you all, to follow your example. I have returned a wealthy man, gentlemen, and it is my wish and intention to put my wealth, as you have put your energies, at the service of suffering humanity."

The applause was long and persistent. Denborough's eyes passed over the two lines of flushed eager faces to the man at the end of the table. Milroy sat motionless, his pale features set and tense-looking. Denborough smiled.

"At first my course was uncertain. I wavered among many projects but now I am glad to be able to tell you that I see my way clear. As you know, Beachtown is itself scarcely salubrious. It is placed in a valley and its guests coming to benefit by the springs are likely to suffer from a close and stifling atmosphere. It occurred to me,

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"Dr. Milroy, I erred. It seems that no man's hands are clean enough to enforce the justice I claimed. I see that now."

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therefore, that a watering place, built on the mountain top, with every modern contrivance for the comfort and entertainment of its guests would be more likely to meet the general demand." He paused again. The almost persistent ripple of applause had died away into a stupid silence. Only Milroy drew himself up as though preparing to meet a blow. "Gentlemen," Denborough went on deliberately, "it is with the greatest pleasure that I am able to inform you that my idea is to take a very practical form. I have obtained concessions of land which will enable me to direct part of the spring to a better level. One of England's best architects is drawing up plans for a model sanatorium and also for the hotels, concert halls and bath establishments which will be necessary. I have the promise of four of the first London specialists to take over the medical department. Finally, and I know this part will appeal to your generous instincts, no company will be formed and all profits that are made will be set aside for the improvement and maintenance of the new town. In a year's time I hope to have the happiness of opening the place to the general public and that you, as my boyhood's friends, will honor me by being the first to accept its hospitality."

He sat down. The silence seemed never ending. Only Denis Milroy had moved. He sat forward a little. In that moment his resentment and bitterness had died. These ashy-faced, sickly-looking men on either side were no longer ridiculous or contemptible. They were part of himself. In a flash of intuition he saw their lives, mean, plodding, gray-bound in monotony, rising for one glowing, burning instant into the broad light of prosperity, to be thrust back into utter ruin. His own ruin was forgotten, swamped in the wave of an all-embracing passion of pity. Their pomposity, their very ingratitude had become pardonable, comprehensible. In their dream of greatness they had forgotten him, in this catastrophe they were like children, broken and stupefied. Itwas for him to lead again.

"Mr. Denborough," he said, "do you realize what your project means to us?"

"Yes— I fancy so."

"We won't mince words with each other. You came here to ruin Beachtown. You asked us here to tell us so?"

"You are a very intelligent young man."

"That is your revenge?"

Denborough made no answer. He leaned forward, and choosing a walnut from a silver dish cracked it deliberately. The action was final in its ruthlessness.

"Mr. Denborough, you are not only ruining those who once injured you. You are ruining hundreds who were not born at the time—who scarcely knew your name——"

"You, for instance?"

The sneering, taunting eyes met Milroy's without a flinch.

"Yes—I. I am responsible for Beachtown. I led these men to believe in the town's future—to risk their all. I am responsible. What have I done to you that you should crush me?"

"What are you to me, Dr. Milroy, that I should hesitate?"

"Mr. Denborough, are you so immaculate that you dare claim such a penalty?"

Andrew Denborough's clenched fist crashed down upon the table.

"Yes," he said. "I have toiled and moiled with clean hands so that I could come back and do this. They"—he pointed a savage finger at each man in turn—"they harried me out with a lie, and now I shall harry them out—justly. That is all."

"Then there is no more to be said. We shall fight you as best we can."

"You will be beaten."

"I know. But we shall fight. Come, gentlemen."

They rose and followed him like sheep. The Mayor stumbled as he crossed the room and his round, ruddy face seemed sallow and shrunken. No one looked at the man seated alone at the head of the deserted table.

As the door closed he burst out laughing.

ANDREW DENBOROUGH tossed a letter across to the secretary.

"You can answer that yourself," he said. "Tell them I'm busy, but that following your instructions you have the honor to inform the deputation that I have nothing to add to my first announcement."

"Yes, sir."

"That will do. No, wait!" He was silent for a moment, his heavy chin resting on his chest, his eyes fixed moodily on the pile of papers before him. "You've been about the town, Burrows," he said. "You

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must have heard scraps of gossip. What's the news?"

"Things seem to be pretty bad, sir. There's a kind of panic—everybody wanting to sell out and no one buying. It looks as though most of them are badly hit."

"And they are cursing me, eh?"

The young man smiled uncertainly.

"It's pretty fair, sir."

"That's what I wanted. You can go."

"Thank you, sir."

The door closed. Denborough remained motionless at his table by the window. Outside it had begun to drizzle—a dismal descent, half rain, half snow, which seemed to draw down with it a curtain of premature twilight. The lights of the town, blurred and haloed by the mist, had already begun to spring out, marking the line of the streets, but the hills opposite were hidden. Denborough pushed aside the curtain and peered out. From the direction of his gaze he seemed to be trying to pick out some special landmark, but all that stood out distinctly was the great square building opposite—Beachtown's newly opened sanatorium. Denborough relapsed with a smothered sigh and switched on his electric reading lamp. The powerful rays fought with a melancholy, fast increasing darkness.

The door opened softly.

"A lady to see you, sir."

Denborough nodded abstractedly. He did not appear to have heard, for even after the door closed again he did not move. Then quite suddenly, as though touched by an invisible warning, he turned. The next minute he was on his feet.

"Mother——!"

He had taken an involuntary step toward her. She waved him back with a gesture as final as any of his own.

"Keep your place, Andrew. Don't come near me. I have not come here to sentimentalize or to play at reconciliation. Sit down."

"By all means." He obeyed her. His face was hard-set and without a trace of emotion, but his hands were tight-clenched on the arm of his chair. "I am afraid I don't understand you, Mother," he went on. "I have not returned as a prodigal and I did not expect a fatted calf to be killed in my honor. But I expected justice—from you, at least."

"Did you?" she asked.

"I confess—yes. Probably I have some foolish, inherited idea of a mother's loyalty to her children—an antiquated idea, no doubt. At any rate, I was learning to accept facts—to understand that to be accused is paramount in your eyes to guilt. Only I can not understand why you have come now."

"Can't you?"

"No. Won't you sit down at least, Mother?"

"I prefer to stand."

He threw back his head with anger.

"I can only suppose you have come to plead. That protégé of yours—that Milroy has been whining to you."

"No one has whined, Andrew Denborough. I have not come here to plead with you. You came to Beachtown to administer justice, as you thought. I also have come to administer justice."

"You? On whom?"

"On you."

He sat stiff and straight, wholly unmoved.

"I am prepared to accept justice. I was and am innocent. The world—every one but you—knows that much."

"Every one but me!" The shadow of a smile twisted her thin lips. "Your hands are quite clean, Andrew Denborough?"

He nodded with a fierce, controlled triumph. "Yes."

"THAT is your judgment and the world's judgment. You have kept your man-made code of laws, and you count yourself innocent and honorable. But there are other codes, my son—there is mine."

"Yours?"

He bent forward, his deep-set eyes striving to pierce the shadows that veiled her face. "Yours?" he repeated half mockingly.

She nodded.

"If you had committed a murder, I should have followed you to the foot of the gallows; if you had forged that check, if you had cheated and lied, if you had broken every mortal law and had paid the mortal penalty I should have stood by you, I should have lived and waited for you. I should have received you back now in the face of every man. But you have broken *my* code, my son, and your sin is unatoned." She took a step forward and came into the circle of light. The poverty of her dress fell from her. She was still old, but her age was terrible.

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In her passionless accusatory strength she towered above him. "I have come to claim atonement," she said.

"Mother!" He rose involuntarily as though to meet her and what was to come. "Mother—I don't understand you——"

"Jenny Ward is dead."

"Jenny——"

"She came to me a year after you left. She died in my arms. I gave her a promise when she was dying and I have kept my promise. I mean to keep it now."

"Well——?"

She made a single gesture—her first.

"Don't you understand now?" she said. "It's your son you are ruining—with the rest, Andrew Denborough."

His hand went out searchingly, blindly. She did not take it. Her eyes never released his. "I have fought your battle," she went on. "I gave your son a name. I hid your dishonor from him. I shielded him from the curses you laid on him. I paid your debt to him. Now you have to pay your debt to me. I am your mother and your judge, Andrew."

"My judge!" He turned from her, looking at the littered table, at his own hands, as though in some inexplicable way they troubled him. And lastly his eyes went back to hers with a dogged challenge.

"I did not know—I could not have known," he said.

"You never sought to know," she returned relentlessly. "You know now."

"Even if I accepted your judgment—it is too late."

"It is not too late."

"You are trying to confuse the issues. You are trying to confuse injustice with a youthful madness—crime with error. There is no analogy——"

"So men say. But sin is sin, dishonor is dishonor. That is my code." She turned and went back to the door and opened it. "Denis," she called, "my son wishes to speak with you—both."

"Mother—what are you asking of me?"

"What you claimed—justice."

The man's eyes followed her frail, still upright figure as it came slowly back to him. Once more he held out his hand, at first protestingly, then pleadingly. She brushed it ruthlessly aside. Then of a sudden he braced himself. Denis Milroy stood on the threshold. He too held himself defiantly, his young head thrown back in challenging self-assurance. His wife clung to his arm, but her face was as proud, as fearless.

"Mr. Denborough," he began, "your mother has asked me to speak with you—and to bring my wife. I have consented against my will. I do not profess to see any purpose in our coming, for I have not come to beg of you. I hope you know that——"

Denborough raised his hand.

"I know and understand," he said. "But my mother—our mother was right. I wish to speak to you—I ask you as a favor to listen to me and to carry my message—to the rest. Dr. Milroy, I speak to you as one man to another. And all men err. I erred. It seems that no man's hands are clean enough to enforce the justice I claimed. I see that now. Will you tell the others that I retract all I said that night—that I am sorry?" He straightened his shoulders. "The work that I have begun will go on, Dr. Milroy. But it shall be my gift to Beachtown—my act of restitution, shall we say? Is it accepted?"

There was a moment of painful silence. Alice Milroy looked at the man standing by the light and then up to her husband's hard-set face.

"DENIS!" she said imperatively. "Don't you understand—don't you know what it is costing? Can't you be generous, too?"

Then his hand went out.

"My wife is right, Mr. Denborough. You *are* generous. Your offer is accepted. I ask your forgiveness for my hesitation, for every bitter thought I may have had against——"

"And I yours—for every act." He turned away with his face to the shadow. "Dr. Milroy, I hope one day we shall all meet again—that you will grant me a little of your friendship—both of you. But to-day I am tired. You will understand that it is not easy for a man of my years and temperament to yield——"

"I understand and honor you. I will take your message to your old friends, Mr. Denborough."

He heard them cross the room. He heard the door close, and then swung round with a smothered exclamation. The black-clad figure in the shadow had not moved.

"Mother—isn't it enough?"

She came to him and put her arms about his bowed shoulders and kissed him.

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The Amazing Redemption of a Derelict

Mellowing Money

Amos Whittlesea on His Deathbed Takes a Last Thrust at Bethsaida by Making Archer His Heir. Archer Is as Much Dismayed as Bethsaida

By Francis Lynde

Author of "The Real Man," "The Wreckers," "Pirates' Hope," etc.

Illustrations by J. M. Clement

Begin this serial with any instalment. The story is here up to this issue.

THE rôle of returned prodigal was not of Archer Griffith's selection. It was thrust upon him by an outraged brakeman who at Bethsaida threw him off the freight which he had selected for his westward journey. During his three years of vagabondage, he had carefully avoided his old home, but since he had made an enforced landing there, he decided to look around before boarding another freight.

Bethsaida lived up to his idea of it by jailing him for vagrancy within two hours of his arrival, and sentencing him to thirty days with the street-repairing gang. The situation appealed to Griffith's distorted sense of humor, and when his old friend, John Kingsley, obtained his release and invited him to be his guest, he decided to accept, for pride and shame had long been strangers to him.

He warned Kingsley not to expect gratitude or any fine feelings from him. At first Kingsley was hopeful of changing Griffith's attitude, but he soon came to believe decent living no longer appealed to him. Had it not been for the insistence of Margery Stillwell, a friend of both men in their schooldays, Kingsley might have been tempted to retract his offer of indefinite hospitality, for Griffith misused it in many ways. He frequented Tom Gaffney's poolroom and road-house, and it was rumored that he sat in at cards and took care that the house got its share. Also he was known to be friendly with Gaffney's daughter, Roxanna.

Two things, however, penetrated his hardness, although he was careful not to show it—Margery's interest, and Kingsley's generous, unexacting friendship.

He was greatly distressed to learn from Kingsley that he had fallen into the clutches of Amos Whittlesea, the town banker, a miser and conscienceless usurer who, financially speaking, had his heel on the neck of the whole countryside. Griffith was going to leave Bethsaida, but before doing so he determined if possible to get Kingsley out of his difficulty. He planned to take from Whittlesea's safe in the bank the papers in which Kingsley had signed away the Star Machine Works.

There had been a number of burglaries about the town recently. Griffith had, of course, been suspected, and as he set out in a heavy thunderstorm to rob Whittlesea's safe, he was amused at the way in which

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he was living up to Bethsaida's estimate of him.

He had been gathering his tools from the Star works for some time, and the crash of the storm made it possible to blow the safe without giving an alarm. Quite easily he found the papers he was seeking, and putting them in an inside pocket, he made his way through the storm to the works. He placed the papers in Kingsley's safe, the combination of which he had secured beforehand, and started back. As he was passing the bank he heard cries from the rooms above it where Amos Whittlesea lived. Finding the door which led up-stairs open, he went up and discovered Whittlesea in bed struggling with two masked men who were trying to extort from him the combination to the safe by burning the soles of his feet.

They leaped up as Griffith came into the room and hurled themselves on him. After a brief, sharp tussle they tore themselves loose and ran. At the door one of them turned; there was the crack and flash of a pistol and then the rush of feet down the stairs.

Griffith suddenly realized that he had no feeling in his right arm, and, turning to Whittlesea, he saw that the bullet had found a second target. He gave him very elementary first aid, and went to rouse Dr. Grimshaw. The doctor found Whittlesea in bad shape.

"It will be a miracle if he lives—at his age," he said upon his return to his office, where Griffith was waiting to have his arm dressed. The dressing was so painful that Griffith lost consciousness and he yielded gladly when the kindly old doctor insisted that he spend the night there.

ON THE morning following the night of exciting events, Griffith slept late, wakening only when the doctor came to look him over. Since the thermometer-test showed that he had a slight temperature, Grimshaw made him stay in bed, and his breakfast was brought up by the old colored cook, a sister to Kingsley's Uncle Ephraim.

While he was eating, the doctor came again to say that Kingsley had called and wanted to see the patient, if the patient were able to be seen.

"Sure!" said Griffith. "I could get up and go down to him if you'd let me."

A minute or two afterward the ironmaster found his way to the sick-room. Kingsley was smiling when he took the wounded man's one good hand in both of his own.

"I never know where I am going to find you next, Archer," he said, drawing a chair to the bedside. "Much pain?"

"No; not now. How is Whittlesea by this time?"

"I haven't seen him, but the doctor thinks he hasn't a chance. They can't find the bullet. Tell me all about it if you feel able."

"There isn't much to tell. I was passing the bank corner, just after the storm had gone over, and I heard the old man yell for help. When I got up to his room and broke in, two fellows with handkerchief-masks over their faces were holding lighted matches to his feet to make him go down and open the bank-vault——"

"That much everybody seems to know," Kingsley put in; "only, you haven't got it quite straight. The vault had already been dynamited and looted. What they wanted was to have the old man go down and open the cash-safe for them. But go on. Did you tackle the pair of them?"

"Not exactly; they tackled me. We had it hot and heavy for a few seconds, and then they broke away and ran. As they were going out through the doorway, one of them turned and fired back into the room. Just the one shot, but it got both the old man and me."

"Did you recognize them? But of course you didn't. They were strangers, I take it—the same fellows who have been doing all the devilment of the past few weeks."

Griffith rocked his head on the pillow.

"No; they were not strangers, John, but I'm never going to admit that I recognized them. I can't say that I did recognize them well enough to swear to their identity in court. But they were not strangers, and that is the reason they tried to kill me—to shut my mouth."

"Good Lord! You don't mean to say that they belong to Bethsaida!"

"I'm not saying—to you or to anybody. But if you'll keep your eyes open, you may discover that two families in this town—two quite prominent families—have each lost a member."

"For heaven's sake! But you'll have to tell what you know, Archer."

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"All right, gentlemen; I didn't make my getaway. Fire your gun."

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"I shall tell nothing, because I don't know anything definitely."

"Not even to clear yourself?"

"I don't need clearing. Whittlesea will see to that."

"Did he recognize the two men?"

"I think he did."

Kingsley was silent for a moment. Then,

"How did you happen to be passing the bank at that time of the night—or morning, Archer?"

" 'Happen' is the word. I couldn't sleep, and got up and took a stroll. I was on my way back when I heard Whittlesea yell for help."

"Were you out in the storm?"

"Yes; in most of it."

FOR the second time Kingsley fell silent. When he began again it was to say:

"This will clear you in the Southwick case, Archer. Had you thought of that?"

"Yes. But that is enough about me. This is your day of reckoning. Have you been to the bank?"

"Yes; all Bethsaida's been there by this time. Everything is in hideous confusion, as a matter of course. Larkin says there is no currency missing; the money was all locked up in the inner safe, which wasn't dynamited. But some of the securities have vanished, and the note-files were looted. Some of the notes had not yet been found when I was there a few minutes ago—mine among them."

Griffith's teeth bared themselves in a grimacing smile.

" 'It's an ill wind that blows nobody good,' " he quoted. "If they haven't your note, they can't collect."

Kingsley shook his head.

"Of course I owe the money just the same, and I'll pay it—when I can. But that isn't the only mystery. The biggest one of all turned up when I went to my office this morning. On the day I borrowed the fifty thousand at the bank I had two envelopes in my pocket. One of them held my stock-certificates, and in the other I had an assignment of the finished machines in storage, making them over to Whittlesea. You see, I was still hoping that I might be able to persuade him to take the machines for security instead of my stock. He refused to do it, as you know, and I must have fumbled things and given him the wrong envelope, but if I did, I must be losing my mind."

"How so?"

"Because I seem to remember, as distinctly as if it were only yesterday, taking that assignment out of its envelope after I got back to the office, reading it over and then tearing it up and throwing the pieces into the waste-basket."

"Well, didn't you?"

"Lord help me, Archer, I don't know what I did do! This morning, when I opened the safe and saw what seemed to be the identical envelope lying there with some other papers, I was dumfounded. I remembered so clearly tearing the thing up. Then, when I looked in the envelope, I nearly fell out of my chair. What it held was not the assignment paper that I was so sure I had destroyed, but my stock-certificates, neatly held together by rubber bands, just as I had put them up for delivery to Whittlesea!"

"Hah!" said Griffith. "Didn't I say it was an ill wind? What are you going to do about it?"

"What I ought to do in fair justice, I suppose, is to take the certificates to the bank, together with a new note, if they can't find the old one."

"Don't be a fool!" was the blunt injunction. "You said last night that if you had the stock in your own hands again you could go to Indianapolis or Cleveland and borrow enough on your own time to square up with the Security. But even that isn't necessary. All you've got to do is to sit tight in the boat until Whittlesea, or his bank people, can produce your note. You'll say that the existence of the note doesn't make any difference—or shouldn't to an honest debtor, that you owe the money just the same. Your play is to ignore that phase of it for the time being and keep on owing it until somebody makes a demand upon you for payment. Don't forget that you were promised six months' time when you made the borrow."

"I'm not forgetting it. Still——"

"Drop it!" snapped the wounded man with a frown. "You've got what you needed. Let it go at that. And one other thing; don't tell anybody that there is the slightest chance of making me a witness as to the identity of those two fellows last night. If they have destroyed your note, you certainly owe them enough to let them

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have their exceedingly slim chance of making a getaway."

"It's dropped," said Kingsley shortly. Then, "Is there anything I can do for you?"

"Yes; you can get in touch with Travers and see if something can't be done toward getting me out of the Southwick mess, and getting you released from my bond. It ought to be pretty evident now that I wasn't the one who shot Southwick."

"I'll get Travers on long distance as soon as I go back to the office," Kingsley promised. "But I don't think you need worry any more about the Southwick affair."

"I'm not worrying; only, I want to get it settled definitely before I vanish."

"You are going away?"

"You've said it. I've overstayed my time as it is."

Kingsley paused, with his hand on the door-knob.

"I don't suppose anything I could say would cut any figure, but after what happened last night—they're saying a lot of kind things about you in town to-day, Archer."

"The fickle populace!" said Griffith. "A few days ago they would have mobbed me if they'd had the nerve. And last night—— Well, perhaps we'd better call the events of last night an accident. That is about what they were, you know. No, John; I'll go as soon as this arm will let me swing a train. As I say, I've overstayed my welcome. There is at least one person in Bethsaida who will tell you so—if you ask her."

"Margery, you mean?"

"No; not Margery."

Kingsley spread his hands.

"I give you up, Arch; you're beyond anything I can do or say. If you must go, you must, I suppose. I'll have a talk with Bradford and Travers and try to get the legal strings taken off." Then, as if at the prompting of an after-thought, "What shall I tell Margie about you?"

"Why should you tell her anything?"

"Because she is asking—how badly you are hurt, and all that."

"Tell her anything you please," was the morose response.

IT WAS not until the second day after the bank robbery and the tragedy in Amos Whittlesea's bedroom that Dr. Grimshaw permitted his patient to get up. By that time Bethsaida was in the grip of a new and still more startling sensation. It was generally known now that two young men, Deacon Harriford's son, William, and his partner's son, Matthew Jefferson, were missing—had been missing since the night of alarms. Also, it began to be whispered about that old Amos Whittlesea had recognized the two in his struggles with the masked robbers.

But this rumor, sensational as it was, was not the only story that was flying about. Whittlesea had sent for Judge Gorman from the county-seat, and the judge had already been twice closeted with the dying miser. It was an open secret that the old banker held the solvency of a good half of the town in his grasp through his money-lending operations, and many of those involved were asking with bated breath what would happen if the old man should die. Nobody seemed to know whether or not he had made a will, but the visits of the lawyer from the county-seat had an ominous cast. What if the dying miser should make such disposition of his property as would require an immediate rendering of all accounts due the bank? The question was fairly catastrophic.

It was in the evening of the third day that Kingsley brought a manumission and a summons to Griffith.

"How is the game arm by this time? Grimshaw been up to look at it to-day?"

"The arm is healing all right, and—yes; Grimshaw has been here."

"Did he tell you the news? Or perhaps he hadn't heard it."

"He told me nothing except that Amos Whittlesea couldn't hold out much longer."

"That doesn't especially concern you, but the news does. Travers has contrived to get action in some way, and you are a free man so far as the Southwick charge is concerned. Bradford canceled the bond this afternoon, after he'd had a session with the foreman of the grand jury."

"Good! Now that I know you won't have to put up ten thousand dollars, or any part of it, I can skip out with a clear conscience."

"There must be no talk of your leaving until that arm is entirely well. I have my orders as to that, and I'll carry them out if I have to hog-tie you and lock the doors."

"Orders?" queried the derelict. "From the same source as before?"

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"You are the world's champion guesser. I stopped by and told Margie the good news as I came up. She is as glad as I am. She and her father are coming up to see you."

"No," said Griffith; "you've got to choke that off some way, John. I don't want to see anybody—least of all, Margery. Make some sort of excuse, and see to it that it gets home."

"Very well. The next thing is something else. Amos Whittlesea wants to see you. Larkin caught me as I was driving by the bank and told me. I'll take you down in the car after dinner. You won't refuse a dying man?"

"Oh, no; only, I can't imagine what he wants of me."

"Nor I—unless he means to do a bit of tardy justice in the matter of your father's estate. He robbed you there, you know."

Griffith's smile was baldly cynical.

"Nothing like that, but I'll go."

ACCORDINGLY, after the early-evening dinner, Kingsley brought his car round and drove Griffith to the bank.

The derelict saw no change in the bare, comfortless bedroom on the second floor, and the presence of the nurse who had been brought over from the county-town hospital did little to make the place less cheerless. In a feebly rasping voice the old man sent the woman away, and he motioned Griffith to sit by the bedside. Griffith had seen men die, and it was apparent that death had set its mark upon the haggard face of the old miser.

"Ye needn't look at me that way," he said. "I ain't got much longer to stay, and I know it as well as you do. What made you come bustin' in here the other night when them devils was burnin' me alive?"

Griffith met the gaze of the hot eyes steadily.

"Why shouldn't I?" he asked.

"You didn't have no call to do anything for me, Arch Griffith. You know that mighty well."

The younger man shrugged his shoulders.

"That's a back number. What do you want of me now?"

The dying man wagged his head on the pillows. When he spoke again, his voice had still more of the old-time rasp in it.

"You're a pretty tough citizen, ain't ye? Gone all the gaits, they say—bummin', trampin', whisky-soakin', gamblin'—all them things. This town ain't got no use for you; it hates you the same as you hate it. That's what you come back here for—to make a stink in their righteous noses?"

"Well, what if I did?" Griffith asked.

"I jest been layin' here a-wonderin'," said the old man. "I ain't had no use for the snivelin' hypocrites, only to make 'em sweat and come crawlin' when they wanted money. Maybe they think I don't know how they've damned me behind my back, but I do. And now they know I'm goin' to die, and they're chucklin' over it because they think there ain't goin' to be no hereafter when I'm gone."

Griffith could not help shuddering at the vindictiveness of the old miser, poised as he was upon the brink of the grave.

"Is this what you wanted to say to me?"

"Mostly," was the crabbed answer. "I jest been studyin' and thinkin'." Then, craftily: "Do ye know who it was that shot you and me?"

"No; I don't know which one of the two it was." Griffith evaded.

"It don't make no difference; they both ought to hang for it. And they won't. With me gone, their folks 'll buy 'em off. If I could stay alive they wouldn't. I'd grind 'em to powder if they tried it. I've got mortgages on every stick and stone Abel Harriford and Abner Jefferson own in this world. I could wring the life out o' this whole damned hypocritical town if I wanted to."

"Your administrator will probably do that after you're gone," said Griffith calmly. "You needn't worry about that."

"That's all you know about it!" snapped the old man viciously. "There'll be lawyers and lawin' for the next ten years, and like as not half of 'em will get off slick and clean without payin' anything but what they have to pay the lawyers for lyin' 'em out of it."

"It's a pity you haven't some one to come after you—somebody who hates his fellow men as whole-heartedly as you do, and to whom you could hand the money-whip when you have to let it go."

The old man raised himself among the pillows, and his face was fairly demoniacal. "I ain't got chick or child, Arch Griffith!" he shrilled. "Could ye find me a man like that?"

"I could find you plenty of them in the bunch I've been harboring with for the past

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three years—men who would take the whip and bring blood where you've only made bruises. Send out and have somebody pick a hobo for you off the first freight that stops at Bethsaida and make him your heir. I'll guarantee the results."

How much or how little of the brutal irony of this sank in, none might know. Amos Whittlesea fell back on the pillows and closed his eyes, and for a time Griffith thought the end had come. But just as he was about to call the nurse the old man opened his eyes again and began to mutter. Griffith stood up and bent to listen.

"Set a thief to catch a thief," the bloodless lips were whispering. Then, with a ghastly chuckle, "I'll show 'em; I'll——" the muttering became inaudible, and the next words that the listener caught were sufficiently startling. "I know how you happened to be around that night, Arch Griffith; you was burglin' my vault yourself. You was the one that blew it up with dynamite. Them boys didn't know enough to do that. They was tryin' to make me go down and open it for 'em. You needn't try to lie out of it. I was awake and heard the blast go off, and less'n a minute afterward them boys busted in and told me I'd got to go down and open the vault for 'em. They wouldn't 'a' done that if they'd already blowed the door down—you know they wouldn't."

"Well?" said Griffith quietly.

"Jest wanted you to know I knowed——" The feeble chuckle came again. "I'm alive yet, and I could send you to the penitenchry. That's what I got ye here to tell you. And I guess maybe I would have if you hadn't showed me what I been lookin' for. That's all. Now you call that woman back and tell her she's got to keep me alive till tomorrow. Then you get Larkin or somebody to telephone for Judge Gorman to come here quick—tell him to come in a machine and not wait for no train. Understand?"

"Yes; I understand," said Griffith; and after he had summoned the nurse he went down to climb into the green roadster with Kingsley.

"Anything startling?" asked the ironmaster, as he set the motor in motion.

"You had it right," said Griffith. "He's a dying man." Then he passed the old man's request along to Kingsley.

"Wants the judge, does he? All right; I'll drive over to the hotel and 'phone from there. But I doubt if Gorman will make a night drive, even for Bethsaida's Crœsus. The judge isn't as young as he used to be."

THE next day Amos Whittlesea died, and so closely had he kept his own counsel that for twenty-four hours after the funeral there were only the wildest rumors as to what disposition, if any, he had made of his fortune.

One report had it that a distant relative had been discovered at the last moment—the rumor could not say whether it was a man or a woman—and that a will had been made in his or her favor. Another—but this gained few believers—said that he had left his estate in bulk to a charitable institution in a distant city. A third, which seemed most ironical of all, said that he had left his wealth in trust to be administered for the benefit of those from whom he had extorted it in his note-shaving transactions during a full generation.

It was in mid-afternoon of the second day after the Whittlesea funeral that young Larry Gibbs, who was reading law in Judge Gorman's office in the county-seat, drove to the Star works and found Kingsley at his desk.

"I'm looking for a person named Archer Griffith," he said. "Do you know where he can be found, Mr. Kingsley?"

Kingsley looked up from the blue-print he was checking.

"Why, yes; I suppose he is up at the house—my house."

"Can you get him on the 'phone? The judge and Mr. Travers want him."

"Anything important?"

"I don't know. The judge told me to go and get him, but he didn't say what he wanted him for."

"Where is the judge?"

"He and Mr. Travers are both at the bank."

Kingsley closed his desk.

"I'll drive up and get Griffith," he offered. "You go back and tell the judge that I've gone up to the house after him."

Ten minutes later the green roadster stopped in front of the house at the head of the avenue and Kingsley let himself into the library. The easy chair in which Griffith had lately spent so many hours was empty. Summoned from her kitchen, Aunt Mandy could only say:

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"Law, chile; I done thought he's heah in de lib'ry. I ain't seed him—nossuh."

Kingsley ran up-stairs. Griffith's room was open and he went in. On the bed was the suit of clothes Griffith had been wearing—Kingsley's gift—and pinned to the lapel of the coat was a note, brief and to the point.

DEAR JOHN:

Like little Joey, in "Bleak House," I have my orders to move on. Once a vagabond, always a vagabond. If you need a better reason, recall the old Greek legend of the man who warmed the serpent's egg in his bosom. I'm going before it hatches. Don't mourn because you couldn't accomplish the impossible.

Kingsley acted promptly. It was only three o'clock, and Griffith had been present at the midday luncheon. Unless he had walked, there was no way in which he could have left Bethsaida in the interval; no train going in either direction. Kingsley ran out to his car, jumped in and headed it for the railroad yard.

Leaving the car at the station platform, he went afoot down a scattering line of freight-cars shunted upon one of the two side-tracks. Near the lower switches he found what he was looking for. Griffith, clad once more in the disreputable cast-offs of the hobo, was sitting on a pile of cross-ties, waiting. As Kingsley caught sight of him, a distant whistle-blast announced the coming of an afternoon freight. He stepped from behind a box car and confronted the runaway.

"It's the unexpected that always happens, Archer," he said quietly. "I found your note some four hours before you thought I would. I have the car up at the station. You'll come back with me, won't you?"

"Nothing like it," was the blunt refusal.

Kingsley pointed to the wounded arm.

"You can't rough it with that arm; you know you can't. You'll get yourself killed the first time you try to swing a train."

"That, my dear John, would be the very smallest loss the world could suffer."

"But why?" Kingsley persisted. "You've been comfortable enough with me; haven't you? Have I left anything undone that I ought to have done?"

"Comfortable! What do you take me for? Don't you suppose I know the dog's part I've been playing—living on your bounty, hanging myself like a disreputable millstone around your neck? Oh, I had an object, of a sort. But for that, you would have missed me after the first week."

"An object?"

"Yes. It is accomplished now, and I'm going—going back to the only life I'm fit for. That is my train that you hear."

"But why?" Kingsley demanded again, adding: "You're not a hobo at heart, Archer. Under this crust you've acquired, or think you've acquired, there is the same Arch Griffith that I used to know and love and look up to in the old days. I haven't lived in the same house with you for something over a month without finding that out."

Griffith looked down, frowning.

"You've hypnotized yourself, John. I'm rotten enough at heart, God knows. You judge other men by your own clean standards. But you ask me why I've got to go. There are two good reasons. You remember that unopened letter you gave me the day after the Southwick burglary?"

"Yes."

"That was my notice to quit."

"I don't understand."

"It was from the woman I married just before our division left for France. I have never been able to lose myself for very long at a time. I think the devil himself must help her to keep track of me in some way. And she is the daughter of the horse-leech, John."

THE freight train had come in and was shifting some cars. Griffith got up, and Kingsley led him a little distance from the busy tracks.

"Is she really your wife, Archer?"

"She is."

"But Lester Bainbridge said——"

"Bainbridge didn't know. There was a series of us poor soldier fools, but I was the first. She has bled me to the bone, John."

Kingsley held his peace for the measuring of a dozen of the slow-pacing steps toward the switches. Then,

"The law would free you in a minute, Archer."

"I know it would. But in the most hopeless human wreck you will sometimes find a queer survival. I suppose I have broken all the laws of God and man in the past three years, but to me marriage is a thing sacred and unbreakable. Inconceivable; isn't it? But the fact remains."

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Kingsley took time to consider.

"I don't know, Archer; perhaps I should feel that way myself—I hope I should. If you are determined to lose yourself again, I shan't put anything in your way, though it does seem to me that you might just as well stay in one place and fight it out to a finish. But that is beside the mark. You may go a little later, but you mustn't go to-day."

"Why not?"

"That half-healed arm for one reason, and, for another, Travers and Judge Gorman are over here from the county-seat and they want you. I don't know why they want you, but I'm afraid it may be something connected with the Southwick affair. I thought that was settled definitely, but perhaps the old farmer has been talking again. It won't do for you to disappear, leaving anything like that behind you."

It was Griffith's turn to consider, and in the end he yielded reluctantly.

"It isn't the Southwick affair," he said briefly. "It's a little Parthian arrow Amos Whittlesea aimed at me before he took his departure. I've been more than half suspecting it would come. So be it." And as they started to cross the tracks he drew a flat bottle from his pocket and smashed it upon the rail.

ON THE walk back to Kingsley's car both men were silent. As they were taking their places in the roadster, Griffith looked down at his travel-worn clothes and said:

"Once more I shall disgrace you, John. Let us hope it will be the last time. Where do we find the lawyers?"

"At the bank," Gibbs said.

The short drive to the bank was made in silence. As the car rolled up the side street toward the avenue they saw the young man, Gibbs, standing on the sidewalk in front of what had lately been Amos Whittlesea's private office.

"They're in here waiting for you," Gibbs said, and the two got out and entered the shabby little office.

Both of the lawyers were evidently taken aback at the appearance of the slouching figure that followed Kingsley into the dusty little den. From the shapeless cap on his head to his broken shoes Griffith bore out his own assertion that he was a tramp; and his manner, as he sat down in one of the rickety chairs, was that of the petty malefactor caught in the act and dragged unwilling before his accusers. But almost at once the trampish hardihood came to its own, and he faced the two lawyers sullenly defiant.

"All right, gentlemen; I didn't make my getaway, as you see. Fire your gun."

The old attorney, whose courtesy-title of "judge" had been earned by a long term of service on the bench, looked up with shrewd inquiry in his cold blue eyes.

"Mr. Kingsley hasn't told you?" he asked.

"Kingsley doesn't know, but I do. Did Amos Whittlesea make a sworn statement? If he did, I don't know why you have had me brought here, or why you sent Kingsley after me instead of an officer."

"I don't know in the least what you are talking about, Mr. Griffith. We sent for you because Mr. Travers, here, was your attorney, and I acted in the same capacity for Mr. Whittlesea. I think you will understand that your presence was necessary when I tell you that Mr. Whittlesea made a will the day before he died in which he named you as his sole heir and inheritor. I have brought the will to read it to you before it is offered for probate."

For the space of ten seconds or so a dead silence fell upon the shabby little private office—a paralytic stillness that made the modest street noises of the small town seem like a gross affront. Then Griffith laughed.

"I still have some remnants of a sense of humor left, Judge Gorman," he said. "If you will explain the joke a little more clearly——"

"My dear young man, you mistake me entirely. It is anything but a joke, I assure you; I have the will here in my hand, and it is legally drawn and properly signed and attested. Mr. Whittlesea has left his estate—which is considerably larger than even those who knew him best suspected—to you in fee simple, and without conditions, save that he says he hopes you will recall your last conversation with him and act accordingly. He refused to tell me what he meant by that, but he said you would understand if I should tell you that he 'had found the man.' "

"It *is* a joke, Judge," Griffith said, fighting back a sardonic grin, "and it is worthy of the devil that whispered it

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into your client's ear. Everybody knows what sudden wealth does to ninety-nine men out of a hundred. Oh, surely; it's a rare bit of humor—to leave his money as a curse to the son of the man he ruined and for whose death he was directly responsible. He knew well enough what the money would do to me. A fortune to a tramp!"

"*Archer!*" Kingsley exclaimed; and both the judge and Travers looked as shocked as though they had suddenly found themselves facing a raving maniac. Griffith got up unsteadily and moved toward the door.

"I won't trouble you to read the will, Judge Gorman. I think I may claim the privilege of the humblest mourner and be permitted to bear my sorrow alone." And with that he opened the door and went out.

For a few minutes after he had vanished nobody said anything. It was the judge who spoke first.

"Well, gentlemen, I must say that in an experience of over forty years this is a situation entirely, absolutely without precedent. Both Mr. Whittlesea's action and Griffith's are quite beyond my powers of comprehension. Perhaps you can throw some light upon this singular affair, Mr. Kingsley?"

"I can't," Kingsley replied briefly. "It is a mystery to me. So far as I can see, Amos Whittlesea had no more reason for leaving his money to Griffith than he would have had for leaving it to a total stranger—nor as much. Was it gratitude for Griffith's interference when the two hold-ups were torturing him?"

The judge returned the unread will to his pocket.

"I wouldn't for a moment attempt to go into the question of motives," he returned. "Probably, in the case of my client, they were mixed, as most human motives are apt to be. Upon the two occasions when I visited him before he dictated the will, Mr. Whittlesea discussed with me, with his usual shrewdness, the matter of the disposition of his property in the event of his death. As you both know, there are no legal heirs of the body, and he seemed greatly angered at the thought that the property, if it were not disposed of by will, would escheat to the state. He said the state had already robbed him sufficiently in the form of tax-exactions. I suggested a number of charities—but the suggestion was offered only once. When he sent for me the last time, there was no discussion at all. He knew then what he wanted to do."

"I'm only a bystander, and I don't know my late client very well," Travers offered. "But as the matter stands now, the old adage—that it takes two to make a bargain—seems to be pretty clearly proved."

"I'm looking to you, Mr. Kingsley," said the judge. "Do you really believe that Griffith will refuse to accept this legacy?"

"Anybody's guess would be as good as mine," John averred. "I think this, however, that if he could be brought in any way to realize the tremendous responsibilities this legacy lays upon him—you see what I mean—I believe there is that in him at bottom which would compel him to accept them. What I am most afraid of is that he will not give his better self a chance to assert itself. He has had a very bitter experience in more ways than one."

"And if he doesn't give himself this chance?" Travers put in.

"He will probably disappear and leave no trace. I may say, between ourselves, that he was preparing to do that very thing this afternoon—less than half an hour ago. I found him down in the railroad yard, waiting for a chance to board an outgoing freight, and had considerable trouble in persuading him to come here and meet you two gentlemen."

The judge got out of his chair stiffly.

"Well, I suppose there is nothing to be done but to wait upon the issue and see what it will be. You'll drive back to the county-seat with me, Travers? We'll leave it to you, Mr. Kingsley, to let us know if anything new develops. In the meantime we'll offer the will for probate, and the matter can rest there for a time. The will appoints Griffith as executor, but the court can appoint an administrator *pro tempore*."

Gibbs had brought the judge's car round, and Kingsley saw the two attorneys off for their return journey. Left to himself, he drove back to his office at the plant and took up his work where he had dropped it to go in search of Griffith. So far as could be seen, the matter was on the knees of the gods—and the gods had as yet made no sign.

WHEN Griffith left the bank, he had no definite purpose in view. Tramping with his head down and his hands in his pockets, he drifted down to the railroad,

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dodging the station buildings and the water-tank and pump-house, and coming out upon the westbound track at a point some distance beyond the yard-limits switches.

From there he stumbled along over the ties for a mile or more to the crossing of a country road, and at the crossing forsook the rough-ballasted railroad track for the easier walking along the grassy border of the highway. The country road led through a sparsely settled farming district, interspersed with bits of woodland, but it is doubtful if the tramper took any note of his surroundings or even realized in what direction his wanderings were leading him.

He was nearing the end of the third mile when he came upon a stalled automobile in one of the woodland stretches. The car was drawn out at the roadside, and its driver was doing something to the motor. The hood was opened, and the lifted side hid all but a khaki-sleeved arm and shoulder of the repairer.

At this first calling of his attention to extraneous things, Griffith sheered away to the opposite side of the road and was about to pass in selfish abstraction when a voice which he had once believed to be the most musical of all voices said, "Why, Archer!" and he wheeled to find Margery Stillwell gazing at him in astonishment over the top of the lifted hood.

"I wish you knew how good you look to me!" she said, as he crossed the road to her. "I've been trying for more than an hour to persuade Eliza Jane to be good to me and take me back home, but she won't do it. Just look at my hands!"

They were shapely hands and capable, as he had always known, but now they looked as if a tight-fitting pair of black gloves were drawn over them.

"They do need scrubbing," he acknowledged. "What seems to be the trouble with the car?"

"I can't find out. It just stopped all at once after giving a few gasps that let me move it over to the side of the road. I thought maybe it was something about the wiring."

Griffith took the hood off entirely and went carefully over the ignition-system. The wiring seemed to be all right, though the system was as antiquated as the age of the battered little car warranted it to be.

"I suppose you've been out to the farm at Walnut Grove," he said, as he fished in the seat-box for the crank with which to test the engine for compression.

"Yes. Daddy had to go over to Griggsville to-day, and he wanted me to take some directions to the man who is running the farm for us." Then: "You mustn't try to crank. You'll hurt that sore arm."

"Don't the instruction-books all tell you that you should always crank a machine left-handed? But I'm not going to try to start the engine. I merely want to turn it over to see if the compression is good."

Awkwardly enough, he pulled the crank-shaft through the four compression-strokes.

"No trouble there," he announced. "Battery next."

BUT there proved to be nothing the matter with the battery. There was a fat spark, and it answered from each of the four plugs.

"Nothing left now but the carbureter," he said, and proceeded to investigate that piece of mechanism. In the midst of this final inquest he stopped short and went round to thrust a twig into the gasoline-tank. When the twig came out dry, Griffith chuckled derisively.

"When did you fill up last?" he asked.

"Goodness! I don't know. I haven't used the car for three or four days. And I never once thought to look in the tank."

"Just so; and the tank is dry," he told her. "Are there any car-owners living along this road?"

"Not that I know of, though there may be. I'm plumb disgusted. What good does an expensive college education do a person, I'd like to know?"

At this he found himself laughing with her as he might have laughed in a day when small accidents merely added zest to youthful enjoyment. It was like stepping over into another world to be meeting her thus upon a plane which made no account of the intervening and embittering years.

"I'll walk back a way and see if I can't find some kind person who will stake me to a little gas and something to carry it in," he offered.

"Really, I don't believe you'd be sure of finding any this side of Bethsaida," she returned. "Let's put the hood on and go wash our hands. I have a towel and a piece of soap, and there is a creek just back there in the hollow."

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"But washing our hands won't get us anywhere with this stalled car."

"Of course it won't. But somebody will happen along if we wait a while—somebody with a car. Then we can borrow."

He went with her because there had suddenly sprung up within him a huge reluctance to break the charm. There were barren years behind, and more barren years stretching out into the future, and in the midst of them was this tiny oasis blessedly reminiscent of a bygone and precious past. One does not lightly turn his back upon the green grass and shade for the burning sands.

Beside a little brook they knelt together and washed their hands. Afterward, on a grassy roadside bank, they sat to wait for a passing car. The young woman was the first to speak.

"Doesn't it seem like old times, Archer? Do you remember that summer in your sophomore year and the high-school picnic, when we wandered off and got left and had to walk all the way back to town?"

"Indeed I do; I remember everything."

"Do you? I wonder."

"You needn't. Memories are things that you can't kill or lose, no matter how hard you try."

Silence for a little space, and then,

"Where were you going when I called to you?"

"I have told you. Not anywhere in particular. If I had any definite object, it was only to get away from Bethsaida."

"You were really leaving us?"

"Yes. At least, I was making another try at it. John made me miss my chance at a train, so I started out to tramp."

"John?" she queried.

"Yes. He drove down to the railroad yard to hunt me up and tell me that the lawyers wanted me."

"What lawyers?"

"Judge Gorman and Travers. I supposed they had a warrant for my arrest, so I went back up-town with John."

"Why should they want to arrest you?"

"There was a good reason, but it turned out that they didn't have it."

"Are you obliged to talk in puzzles, Archer?"

"No; not to you. They were waiting for me at the Security Bank. Judge Gorman had Amos Whittlesea's will, and he wanted to read it to me. What do you suppose he did with his ill-gotten gains?"

"I haven't the slightest idea. Something frightfully wicked, I suppose."

"You are right. He left his property and money to me."

"*Archer!*" she cried, wide-eyed. Then: "But why? Why in the world——"

"Because he was possessed of a devil, I think, and not less so on his death-bed than he has always been. When you are older, Margery, and have sounded the depths of human depravity to the bottom, you'll know that there is no hatred like that which an unjust man holds against those whom he has harried and persecuted. Whittlesea held that hatred against his poor debtors, and he tried to pass it on to the man he thought would be most likely to follow in his footsteps."

"Then you—then you are now Bethsaida's money-tyrant?"

"No; it is only a 'might have been.' Whittlesea could make his will any way he wanted to; I couldn't prevent that. But there is no law to make me do my part."

"You mean that you won't accept and be his heir?"

"I mean that before the will can be probated I shall be out of reach—gone, lost, vanished."

THE young woman was resting her chin on her clasped hands and looking off across the fields on the opposite side of the road.

"I think I can understand—a little," she said. "You called them 'ill-gotten gains,' and they are that—in part, anyway. Amos Whittlesea was a terrible usurer and extortioner, as we all know. But what will become of his property if you don't take it?"

"It will escheat to the state."

"Then all the unjust mortgages and such things will have to be paid?"

"Naturally. The state won't know anything but the letter of the law."

Another silence, and at the end of it:

"You say that Amos Whittlesea did evil that evil might continue: It seems to me that you are throwing away the chance to do the finest thing that ever can be done, Archer—the chance of turning evil into good."

"No, Margery; I know myself too well."

"Do you? Or do you only think you do?"

" 'As a man thinketh in his heart, so is he,' " he quoted. "I don't know the size

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of Amos Whittlesea's fortune, but whatever it is I should probably waste it in a year."

"No," she objected; "I don't believe you would. Somebody has said that it takes a strong man to be a deliberately bad man. You are not weak, Archer. Your worst enemy can't say that of you."

"I don't know what you mean. Isn't dissipation of any sort a weakness?"

"No. Some men drift, and others choose their own way and walk in it because they have determined to. You haven't been a drifter."

"You don't know anything about it, Margery," he returned gravely.

"Yes, I do. Because, you see, I knew you before you—before you were spoiled."

"You think I ought to take Amos Whittlesea's fortune and try to comb out the villainous tangle he has left behind him?"

"I don't think anything about it. I *know* what you will do if you will give yourself time to weigh the consequences that will result if you shirk the responsibility."

"You and John," he said musingly, after a little pause, "the way you two insist upon believing in me is something marvelous. Where do you get your faith? What do you base it on, in heaven's name? Look at me"—spreading his hands. "I'm 'in character' to-day—a dirty, ill-kept, frowzy hobo. And still you and John seem to think that I can be, or could be, something else. I'm sorry to have to disappoint you."

A distant purring began to murmur upon the still air of the summer afternoon, and the young woman stood up.

"You are not going to disappoint us," she asserted quietly. Then: "There's a car coming. Don't you hear it?"

Griffith got upon his feet and stepped into the road to signal. The approaching car held a single occupant who chanced to be the owner of the farm adjoining that of the Stillwells at Walnut Grove.

"Gas? Sure ye can have some, Margie girl," he said. "I filled her up just afore I left home. You'll find a tomater-can under the back seat, young man. Help yourself."

Griffith did, and Eliza Jane's empty gasoline tank was soon replenished. After the good-natured farmer had driven on, Margery took her seat behind the wheel and held the door open for Griffith. But he shook his head.

"No; I can't go back now."

"Then get in and I'll drive you wherever you want to go."

"No; that mustn't be, either."

"Why not?"

"Because I think too much of you and your good name."

She had found her driving-gloves and was putting them on.

"I suppose I can't make you if you don't want to. But you will think over what we were talking about; won't you?"

"It will be many a long day before I shall be able to think of anything else."

"What shall I tell John?"

"I hope you won't tell him anything."

"Does he know you have left Bethsaida?"

"I think he does."

As he stood beside the open car door, she leaned over to close it. For a moment their eyes met and she whispered:

"Don't, Archer—don't look at me that way. I——"

In a sudden outburst of roughness that was almost brutal he caught her in the crook of the uncrippled arm and drew her down and kissed her on the lips.

"That is to show you how far I have fallen," he said bitterly, as he released her. "I have no right to so much as touch any good woman with the tip of my finger; and you are going to marry John Kingsley, the one man in the world to whom I should be loyal. Good-by." And before she had resumed her place at the controls he was gone.

NOW, when one's chief object is to put distance and still more distance between one's starting-point and the end of the day's journey, some more or less discriminating attention to the route traversed is of value. Tramping steadily through what remained of the afternoon, and plodding along as one whose thoughts were as far as possible removed from his immediate encompassments, Griffith turned from one country road into another with little heed for distances or directions.

So it was perhaps nothing more than one of life's small ironies that the last of the cross-roads, traversed just as twilight was turning into night, brought him out upon a well-traveled highway in surroundings that became at once familiar, and he realized that the aimless trampings had merely served to take him in a zigzag half-circle

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round Bethsaida, to set him down at nightfall on the Willow Springs road at no great distance from the Gaffney road-house.

With a profane malediction upon his own heedlessness, he turned to the right in the broad highway and tramped on. This course would take him past the Gaffney place, but now there was method in his mind. A half-mile beyond the road-house lay the isolated railroad-crossing where, some six weeks earlier, he had come awake in his box-car corner to find the husky brakeman invading his privacy. All trains on both roads stopped at the unsignaled crossing, and there would lie his best chance of boarding one of them.

As he doubled the curve in the road which revealed the lights of the transformed farmhouse, he was deliberating upon the advisability of making a détour through the fields to avoid the chance of recognition. But the hour was early and there were no automobiles parked before the gates; so he went on, trusting to the gathering darkness for concealment. At the worst, there was nothing much to be lost if he should chance to be recognized. It was only a fresh access of the hermit surliness that made him wish to turn his back once for all upon the associations, all and sundry, of the Bethsaidan epoch.

HE WAS well past the wide double gates and the lights of the house were blotted out by the intervening trees when the figure of a woman appeared on the roadside path before him. When he saw her it was too late to dodge.

"You, Arch?" she said; and, with an appraisive glance of the gipsy-black eyes that not even the darkness could parry: "It's the Weary-Willie lay for yours; is it? Maybe that's best. They'll be less likely to track you that way. You're going to swing a train at the crossing?"

"Yes," he replied.

"That's the act! Did you make your getaway without anybody finding out that you'd gone?"

"I don't know."

"What time did you leave town?"

"About the middle of the afternoon."

The gipsy beauty's white teeth came together with a little click.

"Then you haven't heard—you don't know what's happened?"

"I know of several things that had happened. But just what do you mean?"

"The yegg-play—cracking the bank-vault. You might be sure there's one man that wouldn't sit down and fold his hands, and that's Jim Macallaster. You know they found an electric drill in the bank and traced it to John Kingsley's shop? You heard that, didn't you?"

"Yes; everybody knows that. What of it?"

"Well, they've found something else. John Kingsley owed the bank a lot of money, and his note's gone, and whatever it was he put up for security with old Amos is gone, too. It was the talk when I left town a little while ago that John was going to be arrested."

"John Kingsley!" he exploded. "That's ridiculous, Roxy!"

"Sure it is! A baby would know that. But it's all to the bad against him in the look of it. 'Twas his drill, and he's the one that profits. Besides, everybody knows that those two kids who was doing the Indian act to old Amos haven't brains enough to blow a safe. If they'd had, they wouldn't have been trying to make him go down and open it up for them."

"Well?" said Griffith.

"That's all; only, it's a wise play for you to duck out. They may not be able to hook the clamps on John Kingsley, but it's only a step from him to the right man, Archie, and that you know as well as I do."

Griffith did not attempt to evade the direct pointing of this.

"I know that you looked in at the door that night and saw me before I could get the light turned off. Are you going to tell them so, Roxy?"

"Me? Would I snitch on the man I—on you, Archie? My car's in the road-house garage. Wait till I get it and I'll run you over to the crossing."

"No," he refused. "There is no such hurry as that. I'll walk along. Good-night."

"Wait a minute!" she interposed, facing him as a man might have done. "For a week or more you've not been near me, Archie. What did I do to you to queer myself?"

"You? Nothing at all, Roxy."

"On the level?"

"Quite on the level."

"There's no other woman?"

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Griffith chuckled derisively. "When did you fill up last?" he asked.

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He made a quick gesture of dismissal.

"You might say there are a good many other women, but only one you, Roxy."

"That's what you said once before; but that time you'd been hitting the bottle. You're not drunk now, Archie?"

"Not with whisky, at least."

"I'll put 'em on the wrong track," she promised. "And when you get to where you're going, you'll let me know?"

"Yes; you shall know where to find me," he answered vaguely.

"Then good-by, and"—in a flash her strong young arms went round his neck and she kissed him—"take that with you. Now go, and don't let anybody see you if you can help it."

Griffith went on, stumbling a little as he walked, and once when he looked back, he saw her still standing where he had left her.

"God!" he muttered. "There was still a lower depth and I had to find it! But I'll pay. I've got to pay now."

For a few hundred yards, until the road curved again, he went on as one walking in a daze. But at the first roadside field he came to the trampish shuffle was dropped like a cast-off garment. Swinging himself over the fence, he faced about and strode away on a straight course across the fields and wood-lots toward Bethsaida.

The town clock in the Methodist church steeple was striking nine as he climbed the final fence and dropped into the short cross-street at the head of Maple Avenue. The Kingsley house was dark as he approached it and let himself in at the gate, but the fragrance of good tobacco floated down to him from the porch as he went up the path.

"Are you there, John?" he asked.

"As usual," said the young ironmaster; and after the returned wanderer had climbed the steps and dropped wearily into one of the hickory-bottomed porch chairs, "Been emulating Kipling's Ortheris and 'walking it orf'?"

"In a way," was the lack-luster answer. Then: "I've come back to take my inheritance, John, and whatever devil's penalty goes with it. Give me a pipe and tobacco and let me smoke."

SO FAR as small-town conservatism might sanction such a departure from the staid and unstartling, Bethsaida blew up with a disrupting crash when it became noised abroad that Archer Griffith, tramp and vagabond, had inherited Amos Whittlesea's wealth, with all its vast potentialities for the weal or woe of the community.

After the first shock, every debtor fell into a dismal state of coma, anticipating nothing but swift disaster. That a disreputable hobo, who had been given a vagrant's welcome by his native town, should turn and rend it, now that he had the power, was a foregone conclusion with many. As is the case in any and every bank, there were many obligations due and overdue, mortgages and notes of hand that had been extended and reextended, accommodation loans to merchants and farmers which Amos Whittlesea had been careful to limit to the shortest possible periods, so that he might exact commissions and supercharges for their prolonging, after the time-honored custom of the note-shaver the world over. With these terrible weapons ready to his hand, the new money-tyrant could slay and spare not, as all Bethsaida well knew.

That he would proceed to do so few doubted, though there were some to say—and to hope—that he would at once plunge into dissipations so fast and furious as to blind him to his opportunity for vengeance. But here disappointment added its stab to anticipative alarm. On the day when he was put into possession of his inheritance, Griffith did nothing more incendiary than to have Jed Blevins, keeper of the St. Nicholas garage, drive him over to the county-seat, presumably for the settlement of whatever legal formalities remained, from whence he returned, quite early in the afternoon, with a couple of suitcases laden with wardrobe purchases, and "as sober as a judge," according to Mrs. Penniman's account. And she was qualified to bear witness, since she had him focused in the object-glass of her spying telescope when he descended from Jed's auto at the Kingsley gate and strode up the path to the house with a grip in either hand.

The following day he made his first appearance at the bank, and was closeted in the little shabby back office for some time with Peter Larkin, the winter-apple-faced old bookkeeper. Keenly alert to every move of its new money-lord, Bethsaida held its breath. Doubtless Griffith was going over the bank's securities with Larkin, familiarizing himself with the dread weapons which

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had been put into his hands by the terms of the old miser's will, and for once in a way the town guess was right.

"It is even worse than I thought," Griffith commented, at the close of the conference with the old bookkeeper, returning the accumulation of securities and promises to pay to the tin box that Larkin had brought from the vault. "With all due respect to your late employer, we may venture to surmise that he never read the Greek fable of the goose and the golden eggs. This town is handsomely bankrupt, Uncle Peter. If we should call in all the money those securities represent there wouldn't be any town left. And with the town smashed, the goose would be dead. A smashed town wouldn't have any use for a bank."

The soft-spoken old man who had kept Amos Whittlesea's accounts for more years than Griffith could remember moved uneasily in his chair and crossed his legs the other way about.

"I used to try to tell Mr. Whittlesea just that—try to make him see that when Bethsaida died we'd die with it. But it was no use."

GRIFFITH sat back and clipped the end of a cigar.

"We're going to try not to be quite that short-sighted, Uncle Peter," he said. "I don't owe Bethsaida any great amount of good will, but I have no intention of killing the goose. That, however, is not for publication. I'll not outline any policy just now. We'll wait and see what attitude the goose is going to take. But perhaps you can tell me something about that. You hear a good bit of the town gossip, don't you?"

Again the old bookkeeper wriggled in his chair.

"It's—it's not very charitable, Arch—I mean Mr. Griffith," he began. But Griffith broke in with a smile.

"I'm 'Tom Archer' to you, Uncle Peter; at least, when we are alone together. Go on. What are the folks saying about me?"

"Half of 'em are scared to death for fear you'll smash 'em. They knew what to expect from Amos Whittlesea. As long as they paid his interest and commissions and side discounts and all, he'd keep 'em going. But they don't know what you'll do."

"And how about the other half?"

The kindly old accountant looked as if he would much rather not say, but he forced himself to take the plunge.

"Mad as wet hens, Tom Archer. They're saying it's an outrage for Amos Whittlesea to have left a butcher-knife in the hands of a—a——"

"Of a damned tramp," Griffith supplied. "What else?"

"W-e-l-l, some of 'em talk as if they didn't mean to take it lying down. There's some foolish talk of trying to break the will, or hunt up another one or something; and there's a still more foolish threat of making the town too hot to hold you. I don't know just what they mean by that, but they are saying it can be done if the good people—that's the way they put it, 'if the good people'—of the town will get together."

"Any hint of how they will go about it?"

"Why, no; none that amounts to anything. Jane Macallaster told the women in the Dorcas Society yesterday that her husband could put you in the penitentiary if he wanted to. But that's nothing but women's talk, of course."

Griffith lit his cigar and puffed reflectively at it for a few moments.

"Maybe there is more to it than you think, Uncle Peter," he said, with a smile that brought back instantly for the old bookkeeper the handsome, devil-may-care young collegian whose "dissipations" had set the quiet town by the ears a few years earlier. "But about this man Macallaster, who is living in my father's house and running my father's newspaper—he is the head and front of the 'wet-hen' group; isn't he?"

"I'm afraid he is."

"What's his idea?"

The older man cleared his throat.

"Maybe it's self-preservation. You noticed in those securities that there's a mortgage on the newspaper and another on the—on your father's house. They were given to Amos Whittlesea, but they belong to you now."

"I see," said Griffith. "But even so, why should he fight me?"

"There is some talk about there having been an earlier will. Mac used to be cashier here in the bank, and when he went out and took the paper to run it, it was understood that the *Telegraph* and your father's home place would be left to him if Mr. Whittlesea should die. Mac told that round, himself, and hinted that a will had been

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made to that effect. Of course, this later will would revoke any earlier one, but if an earlier one should happen to be found, it might open the way for a contest."

"How much of an equity does Macallaster really own in the paper and the home place?"

"You might say just none at all. He bid 'em in at the sheriff's sale, but it was for Amos Whittlesea—not for himself. The deeds are made out to him, but the mortgages cover practically the entire amount. Mac didn't have any money of his own. I've always thought he dabbled in wheat or something. He was always hard up."

"What is the life of those two mortgages? I didn't notice the dates when I was looking them over."

"They are both overdue."

"Well, now," said the new banker speculatively, "if I should live up to the reputation I seem to have in Bethsaida, I suppose I shall tell Mr. Macallaster to come across with the money for those mortgages or take the consequences. I'll think about it. I guess that will be all for to-day, Uncle Peter. Take your precious tin box and lock it up. I'm tired of looking at money papers."

Larkin took the security-box, but the major question which had been agitating him was still unvoiced, and therefore unanswered.

"About the bank," he ventured. "We've been—er—sort of carrying on and holding things off since Mr. Whittlesea died—not knowing just what to do."

"No head, you mean? All right; we'll have one. You say there hasn't been any cashier since Macallaster went out, that Amos Whittlesea had everything referred to him. That's no way to conduct a bank, Uncle Peter. Have you a good assistant on the books?"

"Why, yes. Miss Austin knows pretty nearly as much about 'em as I do."

"Fine! Give her full charge and take the cashier's desk yourself. You can handle it; can't you?"

The mild-mannered little man straightened himself in a way that took several degrees of the bookkeeping stoop out of his shoulders.

"I should hope so, Tom Archer! Goodness knows, I've been here long enough. But the policy—shall we go on in the same old rut?"

This time Griffith's smile slipped easily into the trampish grin. "Cinching folks for all there is in it, you mean. Really, Uncle Peter, I haven't made up my mind yet. If we shouldn't—if we should turn short round and begin to be human, don't you suppose the shock would be fatal to some of our leading citizens? I'm very much afraid it might. Suppose you go on doing as you say you've been doing for the past few days—holding things off. I'll have to consider this shock business a little while longer. It's a rather terrific responsibility, don't you think?"

At which the old bookkeeper who had been so suddenly promoted backed away in retreat, smiling and shaking his head.

"I never could tell, even when you were a little chap, just how much of what you said was intended for a joke, Tom Archer, and it's the same way yet. But I'll do as you want to have me, the best I know how. And—and thank you for the—the promotion. It's a good deal like your father's son to do a thing like that for as old a man as I am."

"Wait!" said the new money-lord soberly. "Maybe you'll want to take that back before you're many days older. I am a very uncertain proposition, Uncle Peter, and you never can tell."

And with this he called it a day and sauntered back to the head of Maple Avenue to waste an entire afternoon in luxurious dawdling over one of the musty books out of the Kingsley shelves.

IT WAS in the evening of this same day that a meeting of prominent citizens was held in the office of the Bethsaida *Telegraph*—more specifically, in the editorial room on the second floor of the building, a space partitioned off from the composing-room at the rear. Present and answering to their names were a goodly handful of those who had been most profoundly stirred by what the *Telegraph* had called "Bethsaida's financial cataclysm," a double-barreled phrase pointing ostensibly to the death of the town's chief capitalist, but with the other barrel aimed at his successor. Foremost among those present were big-voiced Pott, of the hardware firm; Josiah Brown, of the Emporium; Ingleburt, the druggist; Henry Cartwright and his partner, Henry Clemmer, of the household furnishings; little Jake Steffner, the jeweler, and

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Dickerman, the working-man's grocer. In his tilted chair at the littered writing-table, sitting as moderator, was James Macallaster, a dour-faced man of middle age, square-jawed, beetle-browed, with a thick shock of iron-gray hair and a mouth like a steel trap.

"As I have intimated more than once in the columns of the *Telegraph*, gentlemen," Macallaster was saying, the words dropping from the hard-lined mouth like clippings from a metal-shearing machine, "a misfortune which is little short of a calamity has fallen upon Bethsaida. That our single banking institution should have come into the hands of a man who but a few weeks ago was serving a sentence for vagrancy in our public streets is an outrage upon all decency and respectability. Bethsaida cannot stand for anything like this, as I think you will all agree. It is a disgrace to the town and a reflection upon our business ability and our regard for Bethsaida's fair name if we allow matters to remain as they are at present."

"SINCE we all have to do business with the bank, we're all with you, Jim," said Pott, whose line of credit with the Security was already stretched to the limit. "Old Amos has stuck the hook into us, and now this young scamp has hold of the line. What are we going to do about it?"

Macallaster's heavy jaw came up with a snap.

"I don't need to tell you that if we don't do something to pull this hobo out of the saddle we are never going to know what minute will be the next. If he should suddenly decide to call in all loans at their maturity, there isn't a business man in Bethsaida, with perhaps one single exception, who wouldn't have to close his doors. And there is nothing more likely than that he will do that very thing—turn everything in sight into ready money and go off to New York or somewhere and blow it in. Am I right?"

The exchange of significant glances that went round the circle was sufficient answer.

"You said a mouthful," agreed the druggist member of the group. "'Blow it in' is Arch Griffith's middle name. And about that one exception—it's John Kingsley; ain't it?"

Macallaster ignored the question.

"While Sheriff Becker and the county authorities seem to be taking things pretty much for granted, I haven't, and I haven't been idle, as some of you know. Becker claims that it is a dead open-and-shut case against the two town boys who have disappeared, and no doubt a part of it is. But I'm here to say that they didn't blow the bank-vault, and that is really the most criminal thing that was done that night. At the worst, the shooting was only manslaughter, and a good lawyer could probably make it involuntary manslaughter. The two boys were fighting for their lives with Griffith, and the shot that was meant to kill him happened to kill Whittlesea; that's all. But the vault-blowing was the real thing, and they didn't do that."

"How do you know, Mac?" asked the owner of the dry-goods emporium.

"The evidence is only circumstantial, as yet, but if you gentlemen will stay with me, we'll get the right man before we quit. Here is where the matter stands at present: Kingsley owed the bank more than any three of us put together. That is the first item. Item two is that his note was among the papers that disappeared on the night of the burglary, and with it went whatever security he had put up to secure the loan. That much I've succeeded in worming out of one of the bank clerks."

"Well?" wheezed Cartwright, a pudgy little man with bulbous eyes. "Where do we go from here?"

"Maybe you'll say it is all inference beyond these few known facts, but you may draw your own conclusions. Kingsley's note was due on the day following the bank-burglary, and he hasn't made any shipments of machinery in the past two months. I got that from the railroad people. Therefore it's a fair supposition that he wasn't able to meet and lift his bank-paper. Griffith is his house-guest and friend, and, as we all know, Griffith was once placed on trial for complicity in a burglary back East. Add to that the fact that the drill found lying beside the dynamited vault door came from Kingsley's shop, and there you are."

"Is that all?" asked Pott.

"Not quite all. As I've said, Becker thinks it is a clear case against the two town boys—that they first blew the vault and then went up-stairs to make the old man come down and open the cash-safe for

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them. That is possible, of course, but just here another bit of evidence comes in. You all remember that there was a storm that night—and, by the way, it has never been satisfactorily explained how Griffith happened to be out in the storm at that hour of the night, and how he came to be passing the bank at the precisely right moment to hear old Amos's yell for help. We'll let that go for the present and take up the more important thing. There was a witness to that vault burglarizing."

"What?" Pott shouted.

"After the sheriff and his deputies had got through nosing round, I took a hand," he continued. "By the merest chance I stumbled upon a clue. Old Jerry Ackerson, my pensioner printer, rooms in the Clawson Building across from the bank. The thunder woke him, and he got up to shut his windows. While he was doing this, an auto drove up Third Street, turned the bank corner, and stopped just beyond the front of the bank. Somebody—of course Jerry couldn't see who it was—jumped out of the car, leaving the motor running, and went back round the corner to the side door of the bank. Just as this person from the auto reached the door, the light that is always left switched on all night just in front of the vault door went out."

Macallaster let this sink in, and then went on to a breathless group of listeners:

"When the bank went dark, the auto driver went back to the stopped machine, climbed in and drove on up Maple Avenue in the rain, and almost immediately the light in the bank came on again. Summed up it comes to this: When we can find that automobilist and make him tell us what he saw, we may be able to put Archer Griffith where he belongs, and save Bethsaida from the worst panic that ever threatened a respectable, law-abiding community."

Will Archer exact satisfaction from Bethsaida, for all the blows it has dealt him? See the next instalment of "Mellowing Money," in November EVERYBODY'S—out October 15th.

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November *EVERYBODY'S*—out October 15th

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Found

We Recommend the African Veld as a Good Finishing-School for Spoiled Sons

By L. Patrick Greene

THE big, black-bearded man smiled as he read the telegram which the native runner handed him, then, taking down a calendar from the wall, checked off the days.

"Let's see," he said happily. "He leaves Cape Town on the ninth on the train *de luxe*. That gets him to the junction on the thirteenth and—let's see." He fished a time-table out of the desk drawer and consulted it. It was faded, and of last year's vintage, but the train-schedules don't change very often on the Wankie Division of the Matabele and Mashonaland Railway.

"Um." The big man frowned, then again deliberately consulted the calendar, checked up the dates and ran his fore-finger down the column of figures in the time-table. The frown deepened and he scratched his head in indecision.

"There's no doubt about it," he said finally, speaking aloud, as men who live on the outer fringes of civilization are apt to do. "The kid's due at Wankie the day after to-morrow."

He looked up sharply at the runner, who was waiting to be dismissed.

"What is your name, and service?"

"Tomasi, *Inkosi*. I am in the service of the lord of the speaking wires."

"When did you leave Wankie?"

The native held his right hand toward the white man—fingers outstretched.

"Five suns have risen and set since I left that place."

The white man rose to his feet, overtowering the native.

"What is my name?"

"Your people call you 'E-white-ee.'"

"By what name am I known to the black ones who dwell hereabouts?"

"Here, and wherever black ones live, they call you the 'just one.'"

"Then you have heard of me?"

"Aye, *Inkosi*."

"And know that I do not threaten idly, know that I punish always when punishment is due?"

"Aye, *Inkosi*."

"Then tell me—and speak true word for my hand is heavy upon liars—why you have been five days upon the way, when an old man can make the journey in four days, and a young man—a man like you—in three days?"

"There were lions, *Inkosi*——"

"There are always lions."

"Aye. That is true. But these—five of them—were lying in the trail just where it goes down to the ford. I could have gone down the river and crossed at Tanda's kraal, but that is a half-day trek out of the proper trail and the lord of the speaking wires has always said I must permit nothing to stop me when I carry a tel-grum. And so, *Inkosi*, I threw stones at those lions and shouted at them, bidding them make way that I—the bearer of a tel-grum,—might pass by. When I next opened my eyes, *Inkosi*, I was in a hut in Tanda's kraal. Tanda himself had carried me there, having found me lying as one dead beside the trail. For one whole day I stayed in that hut—regaining my strength."

"The lions charged you, then?"

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Tomasi took off his tunic. Long, angry-looking wounds ran down his chest. He seemed to be proud of them.

"It is well I had taken off my tunic, fearing it would get wet when fording the river," he said; "else the tawny ones would have torn it and soiled it with my blood."

As he put on the tunic again he continued, "Undoubtedly those *schelms*"—bad ones—"would have killed me, but the spirits whispered to them that I was a gov'ment man and carried a tel-grum."

"Undoubtedly it was that which saved you," White agreed with a smile.

"Have I leave to go now, *Inkosi*?"

"Yes. Go to the huts and bathe your wounds. Stay there until I come."

"But I must return to Wankie——"

White shook his head.

"Not until the wounds are properly healed. I will send a messenger explaining all things. Here—catch!"

He tossed a large bag of tobacco to the native, who, catching it adeptly, quickly left the room.

WHITE again read the telegram, and then, sitting down at his desk, wrote:

DEAR DICKY:

This is a rotten way to welcome you to a strange land—not being at the station to meet you, I mean. But there's a man coming over to-day, or to-morrow, or the next day—time doesn't mean much in this country—whom I've got to see. Expect to close a big cattle-deal with him—been angling for it a long time. He's a touchy old fellow, and if he came and found me away, the deal would be all off.

So I'm sending Guffa to meet you. He speaks English of a sort, and I trust him as I'd trust my right hand. He went through the Matabele scrap with me, was loyal when all his people were out on the raid. If it hadn't been for him, I'd have—But I've told you all about Guffa in my letters home.

Do what he says, old son, and you ought to have an interesting trip out. Better have your guns unpacked—suppose there's no need telling you that; you'll be eager to have a pot first thing. But I'll warn you that you'll find it different than shooting pheasants in the coverts back home. Guffa 'll dig up lots of sport for you, I've no doubt. He's a marvelous huntsman—got a nose as keen as the best dog you ever shot over.

If you see any lions, Dick, better leave 'em alone. But if you *must* try your luck, aim low. No; forget that. Remember only to leave them alone. They're bad medicine for a novice to tackle—dangerous because they're such blankety cowards. And they've got a lot of hair on the top of their heads which make 'em deceptive shooting.

You can't imagine how fed up I am about not being able to meet you. Fancy! Last time I saw you—twelve years ago, isn't it?—you were a second-form brat in Eton—and a conceited young bounder you were.

Well—cheeri-o. See you very soon. I'm starving for news from home.

Your affec. brother,
JOHN.

"I don't suppose I should have said that about his being a 'conceited young bounder,'" White mused. "Perhaps he's sensitive. But he was, and, judging from the guv'nor's letters, he still is. Well—the bush 'll soon take that out of him. And the guv'nor says he's a thoroughbred at heart. So that's all right."

He went to the door and raised his voice in a stentorian shout of:

"Guffa!"

A tall, wiry native, his face crisscrossed with scars, came into the room and squatted on the floor near the door.

"You called, *baas*?"

"Yah. The day after to-morrow my brother arrives in Wankie, Guffa."

"That is good—the *baas* will be no longer lonely."

"But I can not be there to meet him. One comes to-morrow to see about the cattle, and I must be here to meet him."

"The way to this place is as plain as my hand before me, *baas*. What worry?"

White handed Guffa the telegram.

"Read me that spoor, wise one."

Guffa shook his head.

"Why make a mock of me, O bearded one? I am no mission-bred fool."

"Neither is my brother wise to the ways of the veld."

"I am well answered, *baas*. What then? Let him remain at Wankie until the cattle talk is over—then go for him."

White considered this for a moment, then:

"I don't think he'd like that. You shall go to meet him, Guffa."

"The *baas* wastes many words. Before all this talk he had that in mind."

"True. You will leave at once, Guffa, riding the black horse and taking two pack-mules with you. If you ride hard, you should be there before the train comes. On the way back, trek slow."

"Truly I will trek slowly on the way back," Guffa interposed, "for then I will be traveling on two legs."

White laughed.

"You may take a horse for yourself if it pleases you."

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"The *baas* knows that it would not please me. It is only because you ask me that I ride going to Wankie. I put no trust in horses."

"Then get you ready for the journey. I will load the packs."

"Very good, *baas*." Guffa rose.

"And, Guffa, he is very young, this brother of mine, and without doubt he will not understand many things. But he is blood-kin of mine. Therefore, as you deal with me, so I want you to deal with him."

"It is an order, *baas*," Guffa reassured him solemnly.

IT WAS long past sunrise, and Guffa looked impatiently at the recumbent form snoring peacefully on a bed of rushes.

Once, just before daybreak, Guffa had ventured to waken the sleeper, and was greeted with a surly:

"Go to hell and let me sleep."

But if they delayed here much longer it would mean another night spent in the bush and his *baas* would think that he, Guffa, was not true to his trust.

It was this thought which urged him to make a second attempt to rouse the man who looked so much like his *baas*—now that sleep had erased the supercilious frown from his forehead and the petulant droop of his mouth. So much like his *baas*, indeed, that Guffa was ready to forget and forgive the insults of yesterday.

He bent over the man, intending to shake him gently. His hand was knocked violently away—the sleeper had wakened.

"Caught you that time, my blackbird," he said. "Going to pinch my watch; weren't you?" Guffa made no reply. "Brother John must be a fool," the other continued, "to trust a nigger like you. Bet you'd slit my throat for a tanner."

He rose to his feet and stretched himself.

He had the big frame of his brother and Guffa noted that he was well-muscled—a little too plump, though, too well fed, too accustomed to the luxuries of civilization for hard trekking. Guffa noted all this, and he never erred in his estimation of man-flesh.

"Well"—impatiently—"where's the water for my bath?"

"There is no water—young *baas*. You drank it all last night. There is not enough, even, for coffee."

The youngster scowled and, taking his clothes from a near-by bush, began to dress hurriedly. The sun was very hot.

"I'm thirsty," he complained.

"I told the young *baas* last night"—Guffa began mildly.

"You told me a lot of things last night, and all day yesterday, and all day the day before. You were always pointing out things for me to shoot, and there was nothing there. You don't know anything. Always trying to put the wind up me; mustn't camp in this place because there'll be mosquitoes; can't have a swim in a pool because of crocodiles or fever or—or some other blooming reason." The airing of his grievances seemed to add to his childish fit of petulance, and he continued, "And when I think of the number of times you fooled me into getting off my horse to have a pot at a deer or something, which just wasn't there, why——"

Guffa could stand a lot of things—had accepted many insults in silence because this man was his *baas's* brother—but this contemptuous dismissal of hunting ability called for a defense.

"The buck were there, young *baas*," he said gently. "Whenever Guffa pointed and said, 'See: there is buck; shoot!' buck was there. You did not see it because you did not know what to look for. By'n'by the young *baas* will get his seeing eyes, then all will be well. Look"—he grabbed the boy by the arm, pointing directly ahead of him—"there! Close to the big tree! There are two *idubi*."

Dick White looked in the direction indicated by Guffa—and saw nothing. He turned scornfully away, muttering:

"The silly old fool! I wonder what John's game is to send such a blighter to meet me."

As he spoke, Guffa clapped his hands. There was a snorting noise in the bush and a pattering of hoofs. White turned, but too late to see two zebra galloping madly away.

"I believe there *was* something there that time," he mused, "but I'm not going to let this black heathen crow over me."

Aloud, he said,

"How far is it now to the place of my brother?"

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"If we trek hard and fast, young *baas*, we will be there before sundown."

"And how far to the next water-hole?"

"Three hours, young *baas*. Why?"

"Saddle the horse."

"But first we must eat. It is not good to trek on an empty belly."

"Saddle the horse. I will not eat until I have had a drink of water." It was the obstinacy of youth.

Guffa would have expostulated further, but there was something about the bearing of the young *baas* which was faintly reminiscent of the black-bearded one and Guffa thought it well to obey without further question. He quickly saddled the horse and brought it up to the boy.

"Does this road," asked the latter, mounting, "lead to my brother's place?"

"Yes. Turning neither to the right or to the left."

"And the water-hole—where is that?"

"In some rocks under the big tree."

"All right. Give me my rifle and my cartridge-pouch."

Guffa handed them to him in silence.

"What would the young *baas* do?"

White had gathered up the reins in his hands. On his face was the look of one who has determined to follow a certain course.

"I'm going to ride on alone. I will wait for you at the water-hole."

"No!" Guffa cried in alarm, and he grasped the bridle firmly with two hands. "The young *baas* must not do that; he must have patience. He must wait for me. I will go fast—I will run—if need be I will ride one of the mules. But the young *baas* must not go on alone. The trail is faint—not all the way is it broad and well marked as here."

"Let go the bridle!"

"The young *baas* will promise to wait for Guffa?"

"Let go!"

"You might miss the trail," Guffa pleaded, "and there is no one to show you the way. And there are lions—it is not well to meet *them* alone."

"Let go! You won't? Then take *that!*"

He brought the butt of his rifle down sharply across Guffa's wrists and, before the old warrior could recover, had dug spurs into the horse and was galloping madly down the trail.

AFTER an hour's fast riding the horse was almost played out. He was not accustomed to being carried along at such a rate. His normal traveling-pace was a triple, a pace-deceiving gait, and one which he could keep up hour after hour.

But now his black coat was flecked with a creamy lather, his nostrils quivered, his breath was labored and he rolled in his gait; he stumbled constantly, and it became evident to White that he would have to give his horse a rest.

He himself was in little better plight. The heat was overpowering and sapped his energy. Though he welcomed the thought of a rest for himself, he pulled up with a very poor grace and, dismounting, tied his horse to the branch of a tree, then threw himself down, panting, in the shade.

He intended to make a very brief halt, but the heat was too much for him and in a very short time he was sleeping soundly.

A cloud of mosquitoes swarmed about him, humming a vicious lullaby, and feasted on his face and hands undisturbed. A lizard ran across his face, but he only shivered slightly and slept on. A duiker, the smallest of buck, came up and regarded him with the curiosity all wild things show toward men.

Two hours later White awoke with a start and, after consulting his watch, cursed loudly when he realized how long he had slept. He felt curiously slothful. His sleep had not refreshed him, and the mosquitoes irritated him exceedingly.

Untying the horse, he mounted and resumed his journey.

Every bone in his body ached, and he blamed his plight on the good-natured Guffa and vented his spleen on the tired horse. And the horse *was* tired. It had been forced to stand directly in the blaze of the sun, deprived of the chance to roll or even to crop the sun-scorched grass. The sweat, mingled with the red dust of the veld, had caked hard. A large blister had formed under the saddle. That in itself was agony enough; added to it was the fact that White posted in the English fashion, and gagged at him continually with the curb-rein.

Bewildered beyond measure, the horse reared and swung round sharply, almost unseating his rider. White, in an excess of rage, dismounted, cut a stout stick and,

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mounting again, beat the horse viciously about the head. The boy was almost crying with childish rage.

The horse, now thoroughly maddened, dashed off in a wild gallop, and White, powerless to restrain him, gave him his head. Nor did he pay special heed to the trail they were following.

So it happened that, when they came to an abrupt turn in the trail, the horse plunged straight ahead into the bush, and a few minutes later White was swept from the saddle by the low-hanging branch of a tree.

Fortunately for him, his fall was broken by a clump of bush, and he suffered no serious hurt. Still, some time elapsed before he was able to rise to his feet and take stock of his surroundings.

His first impulse was to go after the runaway, but the horse was well out of sight in the thick bush, and White had no idea in which direction the animal had gone.

There was nothing for it but to get back to the trail and make the rest of the journey on foot. It could not be, he thought, more than ten miles to the homestead.

There was a crashing in the undergrowth near him, and a wild pig emerged into the little clearing, followed by her young. She sniffed the air uneasily and peered with suspicion in White's direction.

The lust to kill was strong in him; he always had been a "sportsman" and, unslinging his rifle, he aimed and fired. The explosive bullet shattered the hind legs of the sow, but she, after grunting commands to her young to retreat into the shelter of the bush, gamely attempted to charge in the direction of this unknown danger.

Laughing callously at the sadly grotesque exhibition of bravery, White fired again, and the sow dropped quietly to the ground.

It was a senseless, criminal act, but White was well pleased with himself as a shot, and pleased also with the execution of his gun. He only regretted that he was unable to take the skull as a trophy—to show the chaps back home. He gave no thought to the sow's young which, as he left the place on the way back to the trail, crowded round their dead mother, brushing each other aside as they climbed over her, squealing their amazement that she should lie so still. Their fate was settled, too; though perhaps death would not come to them quite so easily. Already vultures, called by the scent of blood, were hovering overhead, making ready to swoop.

AFTER walking some twenty minutes and failing to find the trail, White began to increase his speed, finally, where the bush growth permitted it, breaking into a run. In its mad gallop the horse had taken him further from the trail than he had imagined. A feeling of uncertainty obsessed him—a feeling that he was not going in the right direction. Twice he changed his course and then, after what seemed to him an eternity of time, his vague fears were swept aside. Now he was sure he was going in the right direction. He remembered the ant-hill on his left, and the *wachtenbitje* bush just beyond it.

With a sigh of relief he slacked his speed to a walk. What a fool he had been to feel alarmed! Still, it was rather terrifying—just the *thought* of being lost.

He recalled stories he had heard and read of men who had been lost in the bush. They must, he thought, have been fools to lose all sense of direction. He——

White faltered in his stride and then stopped. All the old fears came back with added force.

No wonder things had looked familiar to him. Here was the explanation of the sensation of having been that way before. The ant-hill and the thorn-bush were not beside the trail, but close to the clearing where he had shot the pig!

Refusing at first to admit this, he parted the bush before him and what he then saw left no room for doubt.

Three vultures, gorged to completion, their bleary, red-rimmed eyes half closed, perched on a rock near by, watching a hyena and several wild dogs fight over the bones of a pig.

White had been no wiser than many other—and older—men. He had walked in a circle.

The stories of lost men came to him again, and this time he did not laugh; he saw now only the tragedy of his situation.

A veld-wise man could have followed his horse's spoor back to the trail. But White could not do that. He had no compass, had no idea, even, of the general direction in which the trail ran.

He tried to reassure himself by speaking

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aloud, finding comfort in the sound of his voice.

"The trail can't be more than three or four hundred yards away at the most. It is in that direction, I think"—he pointed east. "Yes; I'm *sure* it's in that direction. All I have to do is guard against going in another circle, and if I keep the sun at my back I'll be sure not to do that."

With this thought in mind, inwardly congratulating himself on his astuteness and knowledge of veld-lore, he set out again, glancing occasionally at his wrist-watch to assure himself that the long minutes were not hours.

Five—ten—fifteen minutes! There was no thinning of the jungle-growth, no indication that he was nearing a man-made trail.

Imperceptibly his stride quickened.

If he had been heading in the right direction, he should have come to the trail by this time. He again consulted his watch. Half an hour had elapsed since he had left the clearing the second time.

Half an hour! And he had been walking fast. He had gone a mile—more than a mile. A hundred and one conflicting thoughts crowded into his brain.

The trail was just ahead—to the right—to the left. He had set off in the wrong direction at the beginning; he should have gone to the south—to the west—to the north. He had crossed the trail unwittingly and must retrace his steps. He——

Then, with the force of a heavy, stunning blow, obliterating all other thoughts, came the realization that he was lost. All power of reason suddenly left him, and he ran wildly through the bush, heedless of the briars which tore his flesh, heedless of everything. As he ran, he sobbed aloud:

"I'm lost! I'm lost!"

"Lost!" echoed strangely back to him and seemed to take possession of his whole being. It was as if some vital part had dissolved within him, and he was horribly nauseated.

At intervals he would cease his mad onrush and shout for help until his voice was hoarse. He fired shot after shot into the air,—then listened.

But no sound came to his ear save the mocking cry of the "go-away" bird.

Then on again—staggering, forcing his way through tangled undergrowth; sometimes falling headlong to the ground, tripped up by some rock or fallen tree hidden by the tall grass.

There came a time when, having fallen, he made no effort to rise but lay face down on the hard, sun-baked ground, kicking his feet into the earth, clawing at the grass round him in the agony of his despair.

When he finally pulled himself together, it was to see the last rays of the setting sun shooting up over the western horizon. In half an hour it would be dark.

Hunger, thirst, the horror of being lost paled before the greater horror of having to spend the black night in the bush—alone.

He felt hastily in his pockets. He knew his search would prove futile, yet he turned his pockets inside out, one by one, and examined their contents carefully. He knew he had no matches, had never been in the habit of carrying them; but he went through his pockets again and again—hoping against hope. Meanwhile the shadows lengthened.

AT LAST he was obliged to admit what he had known all the time: He had no matches and would therefore be deprived of the solace that a fire could give.

His brain worked quickly now. He must spend the night in the comparatively secure haven of a tree. But first to find a tree of sufficient size. There were none near by, and so he forced his weary feet to carry him on—fearful lest darkness should fall before he had found a refuge.

Here luck favored him. Soon he came to the foot of a large tree with stout, thickly-leaved branches. Close by was a small pool. The water was stagnant and covered with a greenish slime, but he drank of it greedily and felt greatly refreshed.

His feet throbbed painfuly, and he began to unlace his tight-fitting shoes, intending to paddle his bare feet in the soft black mud bordering the pool. A stealthy rustling in the undergrowth roused his fears and, taking up his rifle, he fumbled with nerveless hand in his pouch for a cartridge.

His fingers closed over one and, bringing it out, he loaded his gun. There was a puzzled look on his face; his hand again went to the pouch. It was empty of cartridges; it was that which had puzzled him. This fresh misfortune seemed to leave him numb. Events had crowded upon him so

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rapidly, his reactions had been so intense that this blow roused no great emotion.

"I must save this one," he muttered, and his tone was one of bewilderment. "I must save this until I *have* to use it."

He adjusted the safety-catch of his rifle—it was better, he thought to carry the cartridge in the gun. There was less danger of losing it, and it would save the time involved in loading when he needed it.

The rustling noises began again, and without a backward glance White ran to the tree and climbed up into the branches.

The jabber of monkeys greeted his advent, and as he gazed about him he saw many of the tiny tailed people grimacing at him.

Their antics amused him and, for the first time since he had been lost, White smiled.

One monkey chattered softly to himself on his perch not far from White—indeed, had he stretched out his hand he could have touched the little fellow. He was tempted to do so, but refrained, fearing that the act would frighten the little creature away. He did not wish to lose the sense of companionship its nearness brought him.

The shadows now merged into one. The last glimmer of light faded from the western sky. The bush was in darkness.

White leaned cautiously back against the trunk of the tree. His position was strangely comfortable, and despite his intention to remain awake through the night, lest he fall from his perch, his eyes closed wearily. With a supreme effort of will he roused himself and made sure that his gun was safe. It was on a sling hung from his shoulder, so that the gun could rest on his knees. Several times he practised taking it up, releasing the safety-catch and taking aim. Then, content that he could handle the rifle with reasonable speed, he leaned back and peered steadily through the darkness.

There was a splashing at the pool—the "pitter-pat" of tiny hoofs—the "padding" of big, cushioned paws. White thought he could distinguish dark shadows in the darkness. They were weird, terrifying——

A hyena howled; a bell-bird "tonked" dismally; a tiny tree-hyrax, close to White's head, screamed derisively, filling him with fear of the unknown. And then, like the distant rumble of thunder, sounded the roar of a lion. The heavy note reverberated through the bush, seeming to linger in the air long after it had really died away. A strange silence followed, broken at length by the frightened whimper of a doe at the pool; then again the cries of the lesser beasts of the night.

A heavy, hard-breathing something galloped madly by, and at its heels ran a pack of wild dogs in full cry. A zebra—White thought it was his horse—snorted loudly. A moment later it snorted again, but this time the snort held a note of fear and quickly changed to a scream of pain.

The night passed slowly on. The moments became minutes, the minutes hours, and still White fought the desire for sleep.

Suddenly he saw two eyes, two balls of fire, baleful and menacing, coming toward him. His hands closed convulsively on his gun. His heart beat rapidly.

"A leopard," he muttered fearfully.

Nearer, gradually nearer, came the eyes. They were watching him, never blinking.

He released the safety-catch of his rifle and brought it up to his shoulder. He would wait until *it* got a little nearer. But if he missed, or only wounded it slightly—what then? Even if he killed it, how would he meet the other dangers of the night—his last cartridge gone?

Acting on a sudden mad impulse he snatched off his helmet and threw it with all his force at the eyes.

HE HEARD it fall softly to the ground. He had missed; his ruse had failed. But no! The eyes had gone. No. There they were! They were going away from him. The beast was retreating backward along the branch. As he watched, the eyes seemed to separate; the distance between them increased. They were two feet apart—now one vanished entirely and the other fluttered upward.

"They were fireflies," he cried aloud, and laughed in nervous relief.

The little monkey scolded drowsily at the disturbing of its slumbers.

The minutes passed; the darkness deepened. The noises of the bush seemed suddenly to have ceased, and a deep, brooding quiet hung over the place. It was an ominous stillness, and White sensed no feeling of tranquillity.

The branch on which he sat quivered

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ever so slightly. Another monkey, he thought, had come to join the other. His eyes had become somewhat accustomed to the darkness, and he could see the shadowy form of his little companion not many feet beyond him. He saw no other monkey, however—only two more fiery eyes.

"Fireflies, again," he said, and chuckled at the thought of his earlier scare. Then, wondering a little at the shaking of the branch, he turned his head away.

But, as if drawn by a magnet, he turned again to watch the fireflies, and he regarded them intently. Their position seemed stationary, neither advancing or retreating, and they were, he thought, larger and somewhat rounder than the others. He was suddenly conscious of a strong, animal smell—it made him think of the circus menagerie—and as the greenish lights now came toward him he could distinguish the form of a leopard.

There was no doubt this time, and he knew what fear really was—the fear of primitive man, before he knew fire, for the death that stalks at night.

White reached stealthily for his rifle, then suddenly all fear left him. He realized that this peril would pass him by. And at that moment the leopard leaped.

The almost human scream of a monkey in pain, the evil snarls of the leopard and the frightened, scolding barks of the other monkeys sounded on the night air.

The leopard gave the fiendish cry of the kill, calling his mate to the feast. The monkeys hushed their clamor—save for the frightened whimpering of the young and the muttered, boastful threats of the "old men."

There was silence for a little while, then a rustling noise as the beast slid down through the thickly leaved branches to the ground.

The bush-noises recommenced. Afar off, *Ndhlovu*, the elephant, trumpeted loudly. A lion, having missed his kill, roared in baffled rage. From the ground below sounded the rasping growls of leopards at their feast and the crunching of bones.

White shuddered, yet found himself grieving that his little companion had fallen a victim in the never-ceasing jungle tragedy.

Once again he felt alone.

THE sun was high above the horizon when White woke the next morning. He had actually slept and, strange to say, despite the fact that his legs were numb, he felt considerably refreshed both in mind and in body. It was as if something had come to him during the night—giving him confidence.

He lowered himself gingerly from the tree and stamped about in order to restore circulation in his cramped limbs.

A host of the tiny tree-people jabbered at him, their wizened faces showing elflike through the thick foliage. They had forgotten the spotted horror of the dark, had forgotten, even, the taking of one of their number, though its clean, picked bones, strewn upon the ground at the foot of the tree, bore mute witness to the tragedy of the night.

Chuckling a little at their antics White went to the pool and, brushing the scum from the surface, drank sparingly, then, sitting down on a boulder, pondered on the best course for him to take.

He hadn't the slightest idea in which direction to go. The trail might be only a few paces to the north; it might be many miles to the south. It occurred to him that his horse had probably made its way to the homestead. If that were the case, his best plan would be to remain where he was, for surely some one would come to look for him. And yet to stay there in helpless inactivity was just the thing he could not do—it too greatly resembled the giving-up of all hope.

He decided to light a fire—a smoky fire. That would occupy his thoughts. Rising to his feet, he collected a huge pile of brush—then remembered that he had no matches. Hard on the first feeling of despair, it occurred to him that he could, perhaps, kindle the brush by using the crystal of his watch as a burning-glass. This plan, too, failed. A glance at his wrist-watch showed him that the crystal was broken to pieces; he had probably knocked it against the tree during the night.

He received this second blow with a calmness that he was far from feeling.

Perhaps it was all coming out for the best. It would have been foolish to remain at that place. The inactivity would have tried his nerves sorely; he would not have been able to endure it. He remembered now the

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snort of pain he had heard in the night. The horse never got back to the homestead; it had been killed by a lion.

It was evident that he must "find" himself—must get out of his predicament by his own unaided efforts. But which way should he go?

He tore a page from his note-book and divided it into four strips. On each strip he wrote one of the four points of the compass, then dropped the papers into his helmet, which he had retrieved when first descending from the tree. He shook the helmet solemnly and, shutting his eyes, took one of the papers and looked at it.

It read "North," and jumping to his feet he set off at an easy pace in that direction.

Once out of sight of the tree, with its long-tailed population, the bush seemed, as far as White's observations went, to be devoid of life. Not a thing moved, and, though there were mysterious noises all about him, he seemed to be the only living creature in that vast wilderness.

He wondered at this—wondered if the sound and shadows of the night were but a manifestation of his imagination.

Then, directly in his path, he saw a small impala—he called it a "wild goat"—browsing contentedly, and he immediately remembered that he was painfully hungry.

The impala represented food. He would have to eat it raw; it would be unpalatable, but it would be food.

It was an easy shot; he could not miss. Yet he hesitated.

A dry twig cracked under his foot. It sounded like a thunder-clap in that wilderness of stillness and then, to his amazement, the bush seemed to be full of wild goats.

They leaped high into the air all round him, snorting with alarm. He must have walked into the midst of a big herd of them. They filled the air like dead leaves driven by a fierce gale. Then they suddenly vanished, and he could see no trace of them—his chance of food had vanished, too. Yet he was conscious of no regret. His mind was too full of the beauty of those leaping forms and the miracle of their sudden disappearance.

" 'One—two—three! And where's your breakfast?' " he quoted with a smile.

But the hunger-crave would not be denied, and he experimented with the roots of plants, finally finding a bulbous growth which, if not altogether pleasant to the taste, served to stay his hunger.

Then on again, keeping as well as he could to the course he had set himself, forcing himself to observe the creatures of the bush and mark their movements.

By so doing he turned his mind from thoughts of self and the blank despair which would surely follow.

At times he would climb to the topmost branch of a tree and search the country about, hoping to find some trace of human habitation. But he saw only an unbroken, monotonous sea of bush.

After these fruitless surveys he was almost ready to give in and, as he continued on his course, his feet dragged, his head hung down dejectedly—until some new bush creature came into view. And, because he was finding his "seeing eyes," the fits of despondency did not last very long.

He played a game with the wild things now—stalking them, seeing how close he could get to them before they were aware of his presence. It helped him to forget, and the morning hours passed swiftly.

IT WAS nearly high noon when he came to an open space in the bush. In the center of the clearing a drama was being enacted which held him spellbound.

A cow giraffe was encircling her calf, striking out awkwardly with her forefeet at a big, black-maned lion which was endeavoring by a series of short rushes to get at the calf. These rushes always stopped short beyond reach of the frantic mother's strong, skull-shattering blows, and the lion would retreat a little way, his tail lashing savagely, only to make a rush from a new angle.

With one mighty spring the lion could have landed on the giraffe's back, could have broken her spine. But that course held the risk that he might not be able to evade in his leap a death-dealing kick. The risk was slight, but the male lion is a coward as well as a bully. Besides, there was no need for haste. The mother was already tiring. Her coat was black with sweat; her blows, wasted on air, were already losing somewhat of their force. In a little while she would fall exhausted to the ground.

The sight filled White with unreasoning anger.

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Dropping on one knee, he took careful aim. "Not too high," John's letter had said. "Mustn't miss the brain,"—and fired.

The lion reared up on his hind legs, batting the air in front of him with his huge paws. A half-choked roar came ffom his mighty throat; then he collapsed suddenly and moved no more.

The giraffe still menaced the dead thing with her hoofs, but, as White came forward, she turned and, followed by her calf, walked slowly away.

Not until then did White realize that he had fired his last cartridge. He wondered that he was not afraid, that he felt, instead, greatly relieved. The agony of decision no longer rested with him; the decision had been made. He himself, but all unwittingly, had made it. He threw his now useless gun away, glad to be rid of the burden of its weight.

Then on again. Leaden weights seemed to be attached to his legs. His head throbbed; his eyes were painfully swollen. His lips were cracked and bleeding; his bones seemed to have turned to water, and all strength left him.

He was suffering from a reaction. When he least expected it, catching him entirely off his guard, the horror of his situation had dawned on him with a force that would not be denied. The knowledge that he might go on and on with no hope of respite was too much for him—and—and sleep was very desirable.

His legs crumpled beneath him and he fell prostrate to the ground and made no effort to rise.

A few minutes later he was fast asleep.

SOME hours later White wearily opened his eyes. His sleep had been crowded with vivid nightmares, but he regretted the awakening and having to face the real perils and hardships.

A savory smell—the smell of cooking food—tickled his nostrils, and, sitting up, he saw, with unbelieving eyes, a camp-fire burning merrily near by. A pot, hung suspended from a tripod, was over the fire; it was from this pot that the savory odors emerged.

He rubbed his eyes and looked again, half fearing that the wonderful vision would vanish. But no; it was still there. A sudden breeze sent the smoke from the fire into his eyes, half blinding him. It was real!

He shouted joyfully—the shout was actually a hoarse croak—and, rising to his feet, stumbled toward the fire.

As he did so Guffa, who had been cutting grass for the mules and horse, ran to support him.

"Good, young *baas!*" he cried. "Everything is well—hasten slowly."

A few minutes passed before White could gain control of himself.

"How did you——" he began.

"Now is not the time to tell that, young *baas*. Now is the time to eat. To eat is at all times better than to talk, and lion-killers are the biggest eaters."

Guffa made the boy sit on a pile of blankets, gave him a drink of water, then brought to him a plate of steaming buck stew and saw that he ate it slowly—very slowly.

"Don't talk—eat," he said as White, momentarily gaining strength, was on the point of questioning him again. "I will tell you everything.

"After the young *baas* left me yesterday, I, Guffa, followed and that my speed might be greater I took the pack from one of the mules—the big *baas* will want an accounting of that—and rode the misbegotten beast. *Au-a!* And now the thought of sitting is painful.

"And so I came to the place where you had rested—and then to the place where you had cut a stick. Something had made the young *baas* angry—yes?"

White nodded. His mouth was full; the buck stew was very good.

"And," continued Guffa, "I said to myself, 'The young *baas* cuts a stick for my back.' Then I saw how the young *baas's* anger had frightened the horse so that it ran very fast—leaving the trail—and threw the young *baas* to the ground. At that I wondered, for he is a good rider."

"I was knocked off by the branch of a tree."

Guffa nodded, as if glad to have had a debatable point explained.

"From that time on," he chuckled softly, "I saw many things. I saw all the things which were written for a man with 'seeing eyes' to see. I saw the bones of a dead sow and her little ones—that was not a good shot, young *baas*—and, following your

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spoor, I knew that you were lost. I heard your shouts and the shots you fired—yet four times you crossed the trail leading to the place of my *baas*. Truly your eyes were blind. Once you passed close—so close I could almost have touched you—to the clump of thorn-bush where the mules, the horse and I were hidden. The horse? Did I not tell you that I found him not thirty paces beyond the place where you shot the pig? He was standing very quietly; his reins had caught in a thorn-bush."

"But that time I was so near you—why didn't you call to me? Why——"

"Perhaps I was afraid. Maybe I remembered that stick you had cut for my back, and of how you had struck my wrists with your gun that morning."

He glanced keenly at White, who flushed.

"That was a fool's trick, Guffa," he said. His tone was not apologetic—self-condemning, rather. "The wrists—do they hurt?"

Guffa's lips parted in a wide grin.

"They did—until this moment. Yah! Perhaps it was because of that I did not call to you yesterday. But I think there was another reason. 'If I go to him now,' I told myself, 'he will still be lost. Better, then, that he find himself.' And so I contented myself with following you.

"That was a long night, young *baas*. Many times I started to come to the tree you had climbed, and when the leopard leaped I thought the big *baas* had lost a brother——"

"I'm glad now you didn't come, Guffa."

"So? Then you were not lonely—not afraid?"

"Lonely and afraid, Guffa, until the leopard leaped and killed the monkey. Then——" He stopped short—embarrassed—quite unable to express his emotions in words. There was no need. Guffa seemed to understand, for he said gravely:

"I see. The leopard could have killed you but he chose the monkey, and it came to you then that the Great Spirit had not marked you for death yet. Is that it?"

"Something like that." The admission came promptly.

"And without doubt the tree-people whispered much of their wisdom to you—for in the morning your eyes were opened; you saw many things that before had not existed."

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The two were silent for a little while, then:

"That was a good shot of yours, young *baas*—the one with which you killed the lion. The big *baas*, the black-bearded one, could have done no better. But"—he watched White closely—"what would you have done had you missed that shot?"

"I would not have missed the second time," the other replied calmly.

Guffa slapped his thighs with delight. This was a tale to tell when the hunters gathered round the camp-fire. He knew—he had examined the magazine of the discarded rifle and the cartridge-pouch—that had the first shot failed there could have been no second one. It pleased him that the boy had not seen fit to explain or to make much of the deed—ignored it, rather. The big *baas* would have acted just so.

"I can eat no more—I'm full," said White presently. "Shall we go now? I—I want to see my brother."

"We will be with him long before the setting of the sun. All this day you have been walking that waywards."

"Then let us start. I wish, though," he added wistfully, "we could skin the lion first. I would like to——"

GUFFA jumped to his feet and, capering excitedly, beckoning White to follow, led the way to where the animals were tethered.

There, pegged out on the ground, was the skin of a lion.

Guffa pointed proudly to a small hole between the eyes.

"A good shot, young *baas*. But, *baas*——"

"Yes, Guffa?"

"No longer will I call you 'young *baas*.' I will call you 'Ndhlovu,' and as I call you so will all men call you."

"Ndhlovu," White stumbled over the word. He remembered that, in one of his letters, John had said something about a native name being the greatest compliment the natives can give to a white man."

"Ndhlovu," he repeated happily. "Why, what does that mean, Guffa?"

"It means 'the Elephant,' O mighty hunter, O worthy brother of the black-bearded man whom my people call the 'just one.' "

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A Novelette Complete in This Issue

The Ultimate Good

Is There Any Length, Short of Murder and Arson, to Which a Woman Will Not Go to Save a Renegade?

By John Charles Brownell

Illustration by Courtney Allen

SEVERAL people, hurrying home through the dusk and drizzling rain, had noticed her, and at least two kindly disposed men, catching a glimpse of her face, had paused singly with hand in pocket. The hard and hostile look shot from an extraordinary pair of brilliant eyes had chilled instantly their benevolent intentions, and, continuing their separate ways, each, in his own peculiar method of reasoning, marveled that a girl with such a face should be standing on an upper Madison Avenue curb dressed like a derelict.

There are plenty of the male species of derelict to be found in any great city—they hardly excite comment—but a girl, young, beautiful, dressed in ragged garments and apparently down and out, will rouse curiosity even in the unthinking—certainly in a fashionable section of the town.

Her hat, pulled low on her forehead, was a flat misshapen thing that one occasionally sees in a garret or on top of an ash-can. Her jacket of heavy coarse material, buttonless at the top, sagged open and revealed a throat perfect in contour and white as milk.

Her skirt, dirty gray and patched in places, hung to the tops of enormous shoes literally tied to her feet with string.

She had been occupying a fixed position on the curb for at least half an hour when O'Callahan on his beat paused to look her over.

O'Callahan was just an ordinary New York policeman, which, being interpreted, means that he had heart and ready sympathy for the unfortunate. Few know and less are curious concerning the attitude of the big city policeman toward the down-and-outer, but it is a fact that, as a body, they may be regarded as men of tender heart who seldom grow callous to suffering.

A sudden change in her face and figure might have been detected by him had he been quick and keen enough to observe—a certain alert look that at his approach gave way to a pathetic and rather stupid stare, her body sagging into the lines of a drudge.

Out of the corner of a wary eye she had seen O'Callahan coming and turned away, but now, as he stood beside her, she seemed aware of his presence for the first time.

The big policeman inspected her critically, then said gruffly:

"Pretty much up against it, ain't you? What do you happen to be doing up around here?"

For answer, the girl, half turning, looked up at him and shrugged her shoulders. It was then that O'Callahan got his first good look at her face and, if he had suddenly come across a rare diamond in a heap of broken bottles, he couldn't have been more astonished. His natural calm deserted him, and he shifted from one foot to the other in the endeavor to set his mind working in the proper channel. He had expected

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to find in the face of the girl the usual tell-tale marks of dissipation or the well-defined lines of toil and suffering. He found neither. He was gazing open-mouthed into the most beautiful face he had ever beheld in his life, and it didn't contain a line of any kind.

The great eyes stared up at him in stupid wonder. The exquisite mouth sagged open, giving the face a pathetic, forsaken expression that would have touched a heart of granite.

If at any time, O'Callahan thought, this girl had possessed intelligence, something had happened to destroy it.

What he said was:

"For God's sake, girl, what's happened to you?"

Her answer was another helpless shrug of her shoulders and she turned to go. O'Callahan stopped her, gently thrust his hand into his trousers pocket and brought forth a half-dollar.

"Now, listen here," he said; "take this and go and get yourself a room, or go home to your folks."

He would have liked to question her, but he recognized the futility of it. Though apparently lacking in wit, there was a certain something about her that made interrogation extremely difficult.

She looked at the half-dollar resting in O'Callahan's broad palm, then up and into his eyes. A sudden lump rose in the big policeman's throat. He had seen the look of gratitude in varing intensity, but never, in all his seven years on the force, such gratitude as this. It was dumb gratitude, but more eloquent than a poem, and, when the girl stretched forth a hand covered by an old and well-worn glove and took the coin, O'Callahan, almost on the verge of tears, turned abruptly and strode off up the avenue. He squared his shoulders as he walked along with consciousness of having performed a good deed in what he knew was a very naughty world.

The stupidity in the expression of the girl's face had instantly vanished with the going of O'Callahan. It held a wistful look now, and the corner of her mouth turned up into a sweet and whimsical smile. She looked at the half-dollar in her hand, slipped it into her pocket and then did a most unusual thing for a derelict to do. She blew a kiss at the broad back of O'Callahan and said gently:

"You're a dear."

If only O'Callahan might have heard it! Just three words, but, oh, the quality of the voice that spoke them!

THERE are still brownstone houses on upper Madison Avenue with stone steps leading up from the street to heavy oaken doors. Peter Ewing occupied one of them—an old-fashioned home with a library running the length of the first floor.

Peter Ewing was a lawyer—of the kind who rarely see the inside of a courtroom. Much of his work was done in his library, and he transacted a considerable amount of business there. He was a bachelor, and it was the opinion of his friends he would remain one. That he was a creature of comfort was easily evident from the number of comfortable high-backed chairs scattered about the library.

People as a rule liked Peter Ewing. They trusted him, too, and, about once in so often he was called upon to take on the affairs of another estate.

In looks he was rather distinguished, well set up, with a fine head, and hair graying at the temples.

He had been to the window two or three times to look out into the rather nasty night, but he had not seen the forlorn figure of a girl standing on the curb near his house. If he had, the chances are that he would have gone out and questioned her, offered to help her if she gave evidence of needing it. For Peter Ewing had a tender heart and a hand that slipped easily into a well-filled pocket. But if Peter had not seen the girl, the girl had seen him. As a matter of fact, the wretched being had been watching his windows for half an hour.

It was a little after seven that Peter reluctantly rose from his chair, yawned, looked at his watch and decided he must go if he was to keep his appointment on time. Being always on time was not one of his virtues, but whenever his two doting maiden aunts were concerned, he contrived to be punctual. Being a dearly beloved nephew may have its compensations, but there were times when Peter sincerely wished his aunts lived in Halifax. They were just a little too interested in his welfare.

He had promised under pressure to appear not later than eight o'clock at their home in

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Gramercy Park and become one of a box-party. Peter disliked box-parties. Besides, the play the aunts had selected was one of the few worth seeing in New York and he had intended enjoying it alone. "How the devil," he wondered, "did they happen to pounce on it?" It would have roused his curiosity to a degree had he known that Williams, his man servant, and Jane, his housekeeper, were at that moment on their way to this particular play. They had received from some unknown but kindly disposed person a ticket each, and their interests being close together—they having decided to marry when their joint bank-account touched a certain figure—they arrived at the conclusion it would not be economy to let the ticket sgo to waste.

The girl on the curb had watched them leave the house from the basement door, and strangely enough had sighed with relief as they disappeared into the night.

The drizzle had changed to a mist that was about a fog when she saw Peter descending the steps. In a perfect imitation of a creature weak with hunger and exposure she lurched toward him. Running forward he caught her in his arms as she seemed about to fall. Her head fell back on his shoulder and the dim rays from the arc-light shone in her face.

The beauty of that face had seriously interfered with the breathing of O'Callahan but a little while before. Peter, in his astonishment, could only exclaim:

"My God! You poor child! You poor child!"

But the poor child had apparently fainted.

To most men the situation would have been exceedingly embarrassing. The average man would have resented it and looked wildly about for a policeman.

Peter Ewing was not at all embarrassed. His one and only thought was to get the wretched girl into his house as quickly as possible and give her food and drink.

That the wretched girl had reckoned on his doing this very thing and experienced considerable perturbation in fear that he wouldn't never occurred to him.

People as a rule did not attempt to trick Peter. He radiated a kind of honesty that, acting like the quills upon the fretful porcupine, armored him against artifice and deceit.

The girl who lay inert in his arms knew something of this, counted on it, in fact.

She had made this opportunity to gain entrance to his home and be alone with him with care and cunning. She suddenly wondered if he were strong enough to carry her up the steps. Perhaps she should regain consciousness and permit him to assist rather than carry her. The question was settled immediately by Peter, who gathered her up tenderly and proceeded upward with no apparent display of effort. He managed the unlocking, the opening and closing of the two great doors with a certain amount of dexterity and, peeping shyly about, she saw herself borne past the heavy portières and into the library.

She hoped it would be the library. Her work would be easier, for the safe containing that which she wanted was in this room. Still, it was going to be difficult from now on.

Controlling a sudden and intense nervousness by sheer will-power, she opened her eyes and looked up at him. He was regarding her seriously, but she recognized admiration in his eyes and knew that he was probably experiencing another shock of amazement. For the lights in the library were full on and revealed the wonderful beauty of her face.

"Remarkable!" she heard him mutter. "Almost unbelievable!"

IT MUST be half-past seven now, she thought—time that the drama proceed rapidly, for time was going to play a very important part in it. As she made a futile attempt to rise, Ewing placed his hand gently on her shoulder and said:

"Just remain quietly where you are until I can scare up some wine and food. You've nothing to fear, my girl."

Turning, he walked quickly to the heavy portières, and a few seconds later she heard familiar sounds coming from the dining-room. He would descend into the kitchen next; now was the time to act. Springing to her feet, she rapidly surveyed the large room, then started to examine the walls. The safe was in the wall, she had been told. There was need of locating it before he returned. It must seem like a professional job, the work of a vicious and determined crook. She counted on the shock he was about to receive, knowing the value of sudden transitions. He would return, expecting to minister to the needs of a weak and

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starving girl, and suddenly find himself facing a tigress ready to kill.

She worked rapidly, listening intently for sounds of returning footsteps, and at last found the safe—a small affair—behind an excellent copy of the "Blue Boy." Returning to the chair in which Ewing had placed her, she lay quietly until he entered the room bearing a tray. Her eyes were half closed as she watched him deposit the tray on the table. Before he could start to pour the wine she was on her feet, and a gun snatched from beneath her ragged coat was in her hand. Ewing, turning at the sudden and unexpected movement, looked into the face of a woman transformed. It was now a face all evil—deadly, with eyes darting fire. She came close to him with the quick and sinuous movement of a panther and thrust the gun against his side.

"Open that safe behind the picture—quick!" she snapped. "If you don't, I'll kill you."

The decanter slid from Ewing's hand. Never for an instant did he doubt the sincerity of the girl's statement. He was not going to take chances, for the safe had but a few hundred dollars in large bills.

With the gun pressed closely against his side, the girl edged him to the picture of the "Blue Boy," which he took from the wall. A few turns and the door of the safe stood open, revealing documents neatly pigeonholed and a small roll of bills.

"Hand me that money!" the girl commanded.

Ewing obeyed and, with the money transferred to her coat pocket, she issued another command in a voice that Ewing winced to hear coming from a woman:

"Get into that chair and count sixty after I slam the front door!"

Ewing did as he was told. With the gun still turned on him, the girl backed from the room, through the portières and into the hall. Then a most unusual thing happened for, when the girl opened and closed the door leading to the street, she remained on the inside and tiptoed noiselessly back past the portières and crouched against the wall of the hall.

PETER EWING was no coward, but there was a note in the command that compelled him to hesitate for at least a portion of the time-allowance. Then, anger gaining the upper hand of caution, he bounded from the chair, dove through the portières, swung the outer door wide open and ran down the steps.

Now, more than ever, time was a precious element in the plan of the girl in the hall. Darting back into the library, she ran to the safe and began to take from the pigeonholes the documents they contained. One only she wanted, and at last she found it and placed the others back in the safe. Going to the table, she seized a paper-cutter, skilfully pried under the seal without marring it and opened the long envelope. It contained a smaller envelope, also sealed. Scanning it hurriedly, she thrust it quickly into her bosom and put the large envelope back in its proper place.

Voices reached her from the street, for the front door was still open. Ewing was coming back, and some one was with him. Sliding back of the big chair on the other side of the table, she crouched and felt for her gun. It was gone. She must have dropped it in the hall. Ewing and whoever was with him were in the hall now, and she suddenly recognized the voice of O'Callahan. He had found the gun. What would he say and what would Mr. Ewing say when they examined it? They were entering the library, and O'Callahan was saying:

"Sure I remember her. I took pity on the poor thing and gave her fifty cents to get a room with— Holy Michael look at this!" O'Callahan was examining the gun.

"What is it?" Ewing asked.

"What is it?" O'Callahan repeated after him. "If this is the cannon you were held up with, don't ever let any of your friends know you were robbed. The joke is on you, Mr. Ewing."

The girl crouched behind the big chair was smiling.

Ewing took the "gun" from O'Callahan.

"A child's toy pistol," he exclaimed.

O'Callahan grinned.

"Yeah. You couldn't hurt a fly with it. What about me sending out a call now?" he asked, as he moved toward the 'phone on the table.

Ewing looked toward the safe, the door of which was still open.

"No," he said. "I believe this is a little matter that headquarters need not be informed of. It is too good to keep, but I think I prefer telling it myself. Besides, I

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may again meet the young lady who employs such curious methods in burglarizing. I have an uncanny memory for faces."

O'Callahan shook his head.

"You'll never lay eyes on that dame again. Was the money all that she took away with her?"

Ewing nodded.

"She never put her hand in the safe. I took the money and gave it to her."

O'Callahan grinned.

" 'Twas like takin' candy from a baby, but I dunno but what I'd have done the same as you. That kid's toy is a damned clever imitation of the real thing." He held out his hand. "Good-night, Mr. Ewing. You've been a good friend to me and the wife, and if the story is told it'll be you that tells it. Besides, she got me for fifty cents."

AFTER the big policeman had gone, Ewing went to the safe, closed the door, twisted the lock and returned the copy of the "Blue Boy" to the wall. Then he walked over to the table, picked up the toy pistol and examined it. He seemed to have forgotten his appointment, and the girl, crouching back of the big chair, wondered if he would ever go. The sudden ringing of the 'phone startled her. It stood on the table so near her she could have reached out and touched it. Dropping the pistol, Ewing leaned on the table, took the receiver off the hook and, after listening a moment, said:

"I'm starting right now. Something a little out of the ordinary has happened to detain me, but I'll try my best to be on time." Then, after a pause: "All right; don't worry. Good-by."

"Damn the luck!" she heard him mutter as he slammed down the receiver.

She didn't move until she heard the bang of the outer door; then, running to the window, she watched him out of sight down the avenue. Coming back to the library table she switched on the lamp. Taking the money from her coat pocket she selected an envelope from a pile on the table, stuffed the money in it and propped it against the ink-well.

"Two dears in one evening," she murmured, as she slowly opened the outer door of the vestibule. But—alas!—one of them, swinging a night-stick, stood in front of the house, looking up at it, and time was precious.

The man she had robbed already had a good start. It was in her scheme of things to catch and pass him before he reached a certain home. A perfect alibi depended upon it.

O'CALLAHAN did not possess a great amount of imagination, but his bump of curiosity was abnormally developed. His thoughts having taken possession of his feet, he had unconsciously retraced his footsteps until he stood once more before the Ewing home.

"The nerve of her!" he muttered, as he looked up at the windows. "The whole thing a plant, and me a party to it—after seven years on the force. A fine boob I am!"

After this condemnatory outburst it is quite likely that he would have passed on had he not suddenly shifted his gaze from the windows to the door.

THE door was slowly closing from the inside, and in the mind of O'Callahan this could mean but one thing. Some one was behind that door—some one who perhaps had no business there.

Still, one of the servants might have returned. If so, and he should go rushing madly up the steps and into the house, he would simply prove himself a boob twice in one evening.

Thus reasoning, O'Callahan decided that he would investigate in a cautious or even casual manner and, in the event of finding everything all right, save his face. He started slowly for the steps, and the girl, now badly frightened for the first time, peeped through the narrow space left between door and jamb and saw him coming.

She was suddenly seized with a desire to cry, to slump down in the dark vestibule and give way to mingled feelings of fright, rage and mortification.

Up to this unexpected and unplanned-for moment the evening had been a distinct triumph. She had gotten the thing she came for—the envelope with its contents, that, at a low estimate, was worth a million dollars, and now an anticlimax was dragged in to ruin a perfect play. It was cruel.

On came O'Callahan. The grating sound of each footstep reached her ears and caused her to back instinctively against the inner door. It gave way, and she half

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fell into the dark hall. Clutching the handle of it to save herself from going down, she made a quick and complete turn and found herself back against the wall, with the heavy door shutting her from view. Reason was returning to her. If only O'Callahan would do the logical, the conventional thing, she still had a chance of slipping quietly out of the house. Hardly daring to breathe, she crouched against the wall and waited.

With his night-stick held firmly in his right hand ready for action, the big policeman pushed the outer door slowly back and stepped into the vestibule. Finding the inner door wide open surprised and disconcerted him somewhat, but he made certain that the vestibule was empty before stepping into the hall. Here he paused and listened. A faint shaft of light shone through a narrow opening in the heavy portières leading to the library. It was a natural and logical impulse that prompted him to go toward it, to part the portières and look in, and then, seeing no one, to enter and let the portières close behind him.

The girl had hoped hard for this method of procedure on the part of O'Callahan. She was in a position to take advantage of it. But the race is not always to the swift, the battle to the strong, or the getaway to the cleverest. It was more or less a stupid move on the part of O'Callahan to walk over to the window of the library and look out. He had no good reason for doing this, but what he saw justified his action and caused him to dash madly out of the house in pursuit of a wretched object making its way swiftly across the street.

It can be said to his credit that, even in his great haste, he closed both inner and outer doors before precipitating himself down the steps, displaying in a measure the result of a mind trained in minor details.

He lost perhaps two seconds in so doing, which gave the driver of a slow-going car time to block his passage across the street and prevent him from actually seeing the wretched object throw herself into a handsome limousine, the purring engine of which emitted a sudden roar as it started full speed ahead down the avenue.

Strangely enough, there wasn't another car in sight save the one that had halted his passage, and it flashed into the mind of O'Callahan that the girl who had disappeared must be in the limousine, now a block away and going at law-breaking speed.

ROUND the corner came a taxi, and O'Callahan signaled it. He was on the running-board and shouting orders before it had come to a full stop. And then, as if by magic, Madison Avenue became suddenly alive with cars. Flocks of them came round corners to impede the progress of the law's juggernaut. Only a New York taxi-driver could have dodged them at the speed the taxi was now making. O'Callahan, on the running-board and leaning far out, caught an occasional glimpse of the big limousine, now two blocks ahead.

There would be no more tricks played on him this evening, not by a damned sight.

He was mad now—mad clean through—and the language he used to the taxi-driver was frightful. But the driver had been speaking that kind of language for years and could have given O'Callahan lessons in it. He was not in the least disturbed. To keep going was his job, to miss the aged and the very young, and let the able-bodied jump if they had time.

The wretched object in the limousine knew the chase was on. From the rear window she had seen the taxi with the big policeman on the running-board, and she could hear the continual shriek of a horn, one toot of which was enough to make a nervous individual turn a handspring. The element of time was again a paramount feature in the scheme of things. It was now necessary to do in haste that which she had supposed she might do at her leisure.

Off came the battered hat, the ragged jacket, the heavy, patched skirt, the gloves and, lastly, the big, heavy shoes. Result, a very beautiful woman in exquisite raiment, that no one in his sober senses would connect in any way with the wearer of the discarded garments. When she had hastily crept inside of a fur coat that had been considered the rarest kind of bargain at twenty-five hundred dollars, the metamorphosis was complete. The great collar rose high about her neck and completely covered the lower part of her face. She was now quite ready to meet O'Callahan, but her heart was beating like a trip-hammer. He might have seen the number of the car, even through the mist, and insist on some sort of investigation. She knew

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she could rely on John, her driver, to be himself, but investigations take time, and every second was priceless now.

Why had she done this mad thing, and, having done it, what good would result? It was a mad thing, she told herself—an unheard-of, unusual and wholly absurd thing for a woman of her standing to do. And yet, when she had planned the act, the ultimate good seemed to warrant the hazards. And now, having all but succeeded, she was assailed by doubts.

Fifty-ninth Street and a jam—the raucous shriek of the taxi-driver's horn sounding nearer. She looked out of the rear window in time to see O'Callahan jump from the taxi and come running toward her car. Swiftly tucking the discarded outfit under the lap-robe, she leaned back against the cushions and waited for the worst to happen.

The curious ones—those who must always be in at the death—followed O'Callahan to the big limousine and crowded about him.

This was to be no ordinary pinch—not if the attitude of the big cop was being rightly interpreted. He seemed head and shoulders above the gathering crowd—a man big enough and fierce enough to storm a citadel and take it single-handed.

"Look! He's after the swell dame in the glad buggy," said one of the curious ones.

For, sure enough, O'Callahan had stopped before the door of the big car and was staring at the "swell dame." Vicious determination vanished instantly, nor was there any fierceness left in O'Callahan's eyes as he regarded the lady. Only a kind of dazed surprise that gave him a sheepish look.

The occupant of the car opened the door a few inches and said in muffled voice:

"What is it, Officer? Has some one been hurt?"

When O'Callahan had overcome a certain something that was interfering with his articulation, he replied:

"No, lady. No one's been hurt. I thought I—well, you see, lady, a mistake has been made. I beg your pardon."

"Oh," said the lady, and slammed the door shut.

The jam broke just then, and the big car lurched forward, the driver of it grinning in his coat collar. O'Callahan watched it go, commenting in a blasphemous pianissimo on a certain police-officer's hard luck.

The girl in the limousine leaned forward and called to the driver. He nodded in reply, jammed his foot on the gas and kept his horn going almost continually.

Flashing past side-streets that seemed mere shafts of light, the girl went over in detail the events of the evening.

The job was done. That for which she had risked an unpleasant notoriety, if nothing more, had been accomplished. She was now a successful thief, with her swag secure and her tracks covered. Or, almost covered—if only she could arrive first!

In a day or two the theft would become known. The loss of the envelope would bring joy to a few and great bitterness to one. No; more than one, for makers of fine male raiment, loan-sharks and all those unwise enough to extend credit on what they believe to be a sure thing would become, of a sudden, sadder and wiser men.

She felt the envelope beneath her gown, pinched it and heard it crackle. What it contained, she thought, for good or evil! Yet the envelope held but a sheet of paper with but few words on it—words written by a shaking hand.

WHEN Peter Ewing reached the corner nearest his home, he had looked about for a taxi. None being in sight, he started walking. A man in haste will generally do this. It removes in a measure the nervous strain of waiting. He walked at least four blocks before being overtaken by an empty cab, and was not in a pleasant state of mind when he entered it. The driver responded surlily to his sharp instructions to make speed and determined then and there to take his own time. He did just that, and landed Peter in Gramercy Park ten minutes late.

He found his aunts in a stew. Everybody, they told him, had arrived on time. What had happened to delay him? He had spoken over the 'phone of something out of the ordinary. What was it? Anything amiss?

Peter's placidity returned. He had a story up his sleeve that would send his aunts into an agitated state of mind, that might compel the use of smelling-salts and, in a spirit of deviltry, he determined to tell it.

"Well," he said, "we haven't a great deal

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of time, and to make a long story short I was held up and robbed in my own home."

"Oh, Peter, how dreadful!" squealed the elder of the aunts.

"You might have been killed," sobbed the younger.

"Yes," said Peter heartlessly; "I might have," and paused for the effect. "But," he continued, before his aunts had quite decided to faint, "the extraordinary fact of the crook's using a child's toy pistol eliminated the possibility."

"What are you handing us, Peter?" asked one of the men.

"Facts," replied Peter; "the naked truth and nothing but. The extraordinary fact of it being that the crook was a dead ringer for the talented star we are to see this evening, Gloria Waring."

A strained look passed over the faces of the box-party, and each turned toward a woman in a fur coat who was arranging some flowers in a vase on the mantel. She looked over her shoulder and smiled.

"That is interesting," she said, as she came slowly to Peter. "Did she really look like me?"

It was a trying moment in the life of Peter Ewing. Being caught in a gale off a lee shore was nothing to it. He couldn't reply. He could only stare, fascinated by the lovely eyes looking appealingly up into his own.

"Peter," quavered the elder of the aunts, "this—this is Gloria Waring."

Peter bowed, made queer noises in his throat and finally managed to murmur,

"I am charmed to have the pleasure of meeting you, Miss Waring, and I—I hope you will forgive my unfortunate remark."

She smiled, held out her hand to him and said:

"I am glad to have the pleasure of meeting you, Mr. Ewing. You see, I live next door to your aunts, and I know all about you. I hope the fact of my resembling the thief won't interfere with our being good friends."

A laugh at Peter's expense followed, but it gave him time to pull himself together. Still holding her hand, he replied:

"I am glad to learn you live next door. It is probable that my aunts will see more of me in the future."

There was a look in Peter's eyes that had never been there before as he said this, and the girl released her hand quickly and turned to the aunts.

"Your nephew has mastered the art of making pretty speeches," she said, with a nervous laugh; then, to the others: "I hope you will all enjoy the play. Please pardon me for running away, but curtains will not wait too long for stars."

The aunts accompanied her to the door, but it was Peter who escorted her to her car. He was genuinely disturbed over the remark he had made and told her so, but he wanted her to know that he was quite sincere in his assertion that the crook resembled her.

"The thing actually happened," he said earnestly, as they stood before the limousine, "and the face of the girl who robbed me was as like yours as one pea to another. I'm telling you this because I wish you to believe I was not attempting to be funny at your expense."

"I shouldn't like to believe that, Mr. Ewing," she replied in a voice hardly audible, "and I don't." Raising her eyes, she looked searchingly at Peter; then, smiling, said: "You are—well, quite all that your aunts believe you to be, and I—I wish I might number you among my friends, my real friends."

Poor Peter! Until this moment he had been his own man, free to go and come, to follow where fancy led. He would be his own man no longer. Forever after he would long for the music of her voice, and in her eyes find all the beauty of the world.

He knew that something extraordinary was happening to him. He wanted to take the woman who stood before him in his arms and hold her and the desire to do just this thing had never before possessed him.

His voice was husky when he replied to her wish, but he returned her smile.

"I'm not all my fond aunts believe me to be," he said, "but if you will admit me to the inner circle, I shall begin this night to consider myself one favored by the gods."

It was a pretty speech, but she recognized the sincerity of it. Giving him her hand, she said:

"Thank you, Mr. Peter. I shall remember."

Peter assisted her into the car and, reaching forward, pulled the lap-robe about her knees. He recoiled suddenly, as though bitten by a snake and stood staring at the bottom of the car. The engine started and

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he slammed the door almost mechanically.

She could not see the expression of his face, but she thought it strange that he did not respond to her good-night as the car moved forward.

It was not a strange thing for, in lifting one corner of the lap-robe, he had seen the battered hat of the crook and the edge of a ragged gray skirt.

PROMPTLY at eight-forty-five, the curtain in the Winthrop Playhouse parted and disclosed the exterior of a pretty cottage nestling in the hills. The scene, perfect in every detail, never failed to elicit a murmur of appreciation and give those fortunate enough to obtain admission to the theatre the comfortable feeling that they were sure to witness what the critics were unanimous in declaring a perfect play.

The work of the star, Gloria Waring, had captured New York on the opening night. Even her rivals—if, indeed, she had any—were almost eager to admit that she could really act.

The power to convince and to charm added to great beauty of face and figure cannot fail to give delight. Annex to these gifts a fine mind, deep sympathy and understanding, and the world is richer by one great actress.

Peter Ewing had followed her meteoric career with interest, but until to-night he had never met her. Seated in the box, surrounded by his friends, he seemed calm and normally eager to witness the play.

He knew now that Gloria Waring was the woman who had tricked and robbed him, and the thought that she could indulge in such a cheap and tawdry escapade annoyed and hurt him.

"What under heaven," he reasoned, "could be her object? It was after the curtain had rung down on her wonderful performance in the third act that Peter determined to find out. Excusing himself to his friends, he left the box and started up the outer aisle. Half-way to the front of the house he stopped and stared at a couple seated near the center aisle—a middle-aged man with side-whiskers and a woman in the thirties with a fat, good-natured face—Williams, his man servant, and Jane, his housekeeper. Why had they chosen this play of all others, and what were they doing in seats that cost at least seven dollars and were difficult to obtain even at that price? He determined to question them later on.

Stage door-men are a breed. Superlatively suspicious of approaching strangers they bristle at any unfamiliar shadows that darken their doorways and fall naturally into the attitude of attack.

Peter Ewing had never encountered the species, but he immediately recognized a deep-seated growl as a belligerent "Well?" as he stepped into the stage doorway and faced the corpulent occupant of a wicker chair. His casual opening proved him to be a man of courage.

"I wish you to take this card to Miss Waring and tell her I would appreciate seeing her at once."

The door-man rose slowly, and a sound that seemed to be a cross between distant thunder and the Russian language issued from his throat. He made no move to take the card, but Ewing thrust it toward him and said quietly and with considerable firmness:

"You will kindly do as I ask, as the matter is most important."

After several seconds' hesitation, during which he watched in vain for Peter's hand to descend into his pocket, the door-man took the card, glanced at it, made ominous sounds in his throat and disappeared round the corner. He returned almost immediately, eased himself into the wicker chair and scowling at Peter growled,

"First door to the left."

A MAID waiting in the passage directed Peter to Miss Waring's dressing-room door, which was open. The actress was seated in a comfortable chair near her dressing-table, dressed in a very becoming gingham frock. There was a pruning-knife in her lap, and she held a letter in her hand. She seemed very young and girlish, Ewing thought, as she looked up and smiled at him.

"Come in and shut the door," she said pleasantly.

Ewing obeyed, but remained standing until a slight gesture accompanied by a nod toward a chair directly in front of her told him he might be seated.

"How did you ever manage to induce Henry to bring me your card?" she asked, when Peter had taken the chair. "His

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instructions are never to admit any one during the progress of the play, and this is the first time he has disobeyed orders."

"I gathered from the sounds he made that such was the case," replied Peter. "I confess I was a little overcome when he complied with my request. I hope you won't discharge him."

"On the contrary," she laughed, "I am glad he made an exception of you. Are your aunts enjoying the play?"

He seemed to regard the question as unimportant, for he did not answer it. Instead, he looked at her searchingly, and after a moment inquired:

"Miss Waring are you in the habit of making silly wagers?"

With a look of surprise she answered:

"Why, no! Why do you ask such a question?"

"Because," blurted Peter, "your escapade of to-night, your trickery in entering my home, holding me up and robbing me at the point of a child's toy pistol, seems to me to be nothing more or less than the outcome of just that."

"Mr. Ewing," she exclaimed, "I believe you apologized to-night for discussing my resemblance to a thief! Am I to understand that you are now accusing me of being the thief?"

A frown lowered Peter's face.

"Temporizing won't get us anywhere," he said sharply. "I don't accuse you of being a thief, that would be——"

"Yes," she interposed quickly. "It would be quite ridiculous. What possible motive could I have——"

"That's just it," Peter broke in. "That's what I'm concerned with—your motive in doing the thing and your selection of me as the victim."

"You seem so certain that it was I," she replied. "How could I possibly be at your house and in Gramercy Park at the same time? Can you answer that?"

"Yes," said Peter, "I can. The purr of your motor as it started away to-night is the answer. I came down in a hearse. You had plenty of time to overtake and pass me."

"But I didn't—" She stopped abruptly, flushing scarlet.

"Didn't what?"

"I—I—" She faltered, then, leaning toward him, said earnestly: "Won't you please talk about something else?"

"No," refused Peter stoutly; "I won't. And I'll tell you why I won't. You have very seriously interfered in my scheme of things, and I've got to know your reason for playing this trick on me."

Peter was deadly in earnest; she could see that. He looked very unhappy too. How to answer him, evade him—that was the question. To gain time she toyed with the pruning-knife in her lap and, looking up at him with a smile, said:

"I kill my brutal husband with this in the next act. It's such an important property that I keep it by me, for I may forget it. If I ever do, I'll have to cut his head off with the sickle."

Peter didn't smile. He meant to come at her again. She could see it in his eyes.

"Mr. Ewing," she said earnestly, "taking it for granted that it was I who tricked and robbed you, could you prove it if you decided to prosecute me?"

Peter thought a moment.

"No," he responded finally; "and I wouldn't be fool enough to try."

"Why?" she demanded.

"Miss Waring—" he began.

She stopped him with a gesture.

"Suppose," she went on, "that instead of hundreds, this—thief had stolen thousands—all the money you had, we will say. Would you be willing to go on the witness-stand and swear that I was the thief?"

"I would not, and you know it!" cried Peter hotly. "I would be laughed out of court."

He rose swiftly and started to pace up and down the room. Wheeling suddenly, he leaned over the back of the chair he had been sitting in and faced her.

"Miss Waring," he said slowly and very impressively, "when I adjusted your lap-robe to-night, I saw the hat you wore during your pleasant little visit to my home. I got a flash of the gray skirt, too."

Her eyes dropped to the letter she had been folding into a little roll. Without looking up, she murmured softly:

"That is why you did not respond to my good-night, isn't it?"

"Yes," growled Peter; "it is. The sight of the things, coming directly after our little talk, just about bowled me over. I won't attempt to describe to you my feelings as I stood like a fool looking after your car, but I can say that my thoughts were far

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from being pleasant." He stood looking down at her, waiting.

After a pause, during which she smoothed out the letter, she said in a low voice.

"Sit down, Mr. Ewing. I don't go on until the middle of the next act. I've time, I think, to give you some sort of explanation, which, after all, is perhaps due you." Peter sat down. "In the first place," she began, "I am going to ask you to read this letter. It's hardly a letter, though it's—well, after you have read it you can give me your idea of what you think it is." She handed the crushed paper to Peter. He took it with a puzzled expression.

THE writing was hardly legible, but close application enabled him to decipher the rambling and almost incoherent message. It was a desperate appeal for money, and the writer, Peter judged, was either insane or in trouble. Why he should be requested to give an opinion on the crazy scrawl, and what relation it bore to the question in hand were mysteries quite in keeping with the events of the evening.

He returned the blurred entreaty to her with a gesture that meant they must remain mysterious until she chose to enlighten him.

"I'll confess to being a dull fellow." He sighed. "We lawyers are usually conceded the gift of adding two and two and getting five, but even the best of us fail sometime."

He regretted immediately his flippant speech, for, to his horror, he saw that the eyes of the girl before him were blurred with tears.

"Mr. Ewing," she said quietly, after a pause, "desperate situations sometimes demand desperate treatment. You have chosen to regard my behavior of this evening as the result of a silly wager. You are wrong. It required considerable courage to do what I finally convinced myself was a vital and necessary thing to do. You were not, as you seem to think, selected to be the victim of a practical joke. You possessed something that I had to have if my purpose was to be accomplished. The method I used in getting it may be open to criticism, but the fact that it succeeded justifies it—at least in my opinion if not in yours."

"My—my dear lady," floundered Peter, "I—I don't in the least know what you're talking about. Two hundred miserable dollars could not possibly—"

She did not let him finish.

"You will find the money in an envelope on your library table," she went on hurriedly. To-morrow, or perhaps the day after, you will discover what I took away with me."

Peter was dazed, quite dazed. What was it she had said just before backing out of the room? Oh, yes! "Count sixty after I slam the front door." The front door had certainly slammed, and the girl was nowhere in sight when he had looked up and down the street. She had the money with her then. How could she have— He gave it up.

There came a rap at the door, and a voice called.

"Last act!"

"Don't go!" pleaded Miss Waring, as Peter started to rise. "I haven't told you all that I want you to know." The tears had disappeared and she was smiling. Peter's utterly bewildered expression called for a smile.

"Miss Waring," he said feebly, "you haven't told me anything yet. I gather that you have relieved me of something other than the money, which, though I hardly believe it possible, you assure me I will find on my library table!" He made a gesture of despair. "I can't follow you possibly."

"No," she mused thoughtfully, "you don't seem to be doing very well in your addition for a lawyer." Peter glanced at her sharply. "In compelling two and two to make five," she explained sweetly.

Peter experienced some difficulty in controlling his temper at this. He felt he was being baited after all. One moment her eyes were filled with tears, and the next she was laughing at him. She was an actress and acting—that was the answer—amusing herself at his, Peter Ewing's, expense. No one but an actress or a real crook of exceptional talent could have fooled both him and O'Callahan so successfully. He reasoned she was proud of her achievement—that was it—and finding enjoyment in his bewilderment. Well, he had provided her with sufficient entertainment for one evening, thank you. Leaning forward, he made an attempt to rise, but she placed a detaining hand on his arm.

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"Have you no curiosity at all?" she pleaded. "Don't you want to know what I took from you, or why I gave you that wretched letter to read?"

He tried to harden his heart against the wistful appeal in her eyes and failed.

"What you took from me doesn't matter," he mumbled surlily, "and I have no interest in the letter."

"But it does matter!" she cried. "And I want you to take an interest in the letter. Wouldn't you, if you knew it concerned me very deeply? Wouldn't you?"

He felt himself slipping again. No wonder this girl could sway thousands, he thought. What a voice, what glorious eyes, what— Oh, hang it all, she was wonderful!

"Yes," he answered almost resignedly, after a long sigh, "if it concerned you deeply, I probably would."

Her "Thank you," was almost a caress. It made Peter a little giddy. After a hurried glance at the little French clock on her dressing-table, she smoothed out the letter and, looking straight at Peter, said,

"The writer of this distressing message is a boy—a boy whom I have loved all my life." She paused after the simple statement and, turning her head slightly, looked at a large framed photograph hanging over her make-up table. Peter gripped the arms of his chair. The room appeared to be revolving rapidly and the profile of the girl before him seemed set in a mist. She was speaking again, and her voice sounded far away.

"I loved his father and mother," she was saying. "Both are dead and it is better so." Turning from the picture, she looked at Peter and asked earnestly, "Have you ever tried with all your heart and soul to save some of your loved from destroying themselves?"

Peter shook his head.

"I—I've never known any one who demanded that particular service of me," he managed to say.

"Then you couldn't possibly know the agony of it!" she cried. "It is horrible!"

"Peter nodded.

"Yes; I—I imagine it must be. Is that"—he ventured a look at the picture—"is that the man who is headed down-grade?"

"Yes," she replied bitterly. "It was for his sake that I entered your home to-night and stole from you that which—which you will discover missing when you come to look for it." She hurried on as Peter was about to speak. "You may tell him, if you wish, that it was I. He will hate me, for a time at least, but I have strong faith that in the end he will become the man I've pictured him in my dreams and thank me for the theft."

There was a gentle rap at the door, and the maid appeared and nodded. In a flash the woman became the actress. She rose quickly and held out her hand to Peter.

"You must leave me now," she said. "It is nearing my cue to go on. Good-night, Mr. Ewing."

Peter took her hand.

"Good-night, Miss Waring," he responded gravely. "You have given me a most eventful evening. I shall wait the outcome with a great deal of interest."

"It will not be pleasant for either of us," she replied, "but I hope you will forgive me sometime."

"I am still in the dark as to what you have done!" he exclaimed as he moved slowly to the door, "but"—he turned and smiled—"I think I could forgive you everything and find it easy. Good-night."

After he had gone, she shut the door and leaned against it.

"Peter Ewing," she murmured. "Peter, Peter! No wonder his aunts adore him!"

WHEN Peter turned the corner of the passage, he found the doorkeeper in violent altercation with a young man who apparently could not or would not understand the English language as spoken by the minions of the back-stage regions.

They completely blocked the narrow hall, preventing Peter's egress, and he chose to stand back and wait for a favorable opportunity of departure. The young man had been drinking heavily, and was in a state of mind bordering on madness. He stated his intentions clearly in language quite as picturesque as the doorkeeper's, and seemed on the point of backing it up with physical action when the door opened and a burly stage-hand entered. The stage-hand paused just long enough to take in the situation, then crooked his arm round the young man's neck, jerked him into the street and sent him sprawling to the sidewalk.

"Who's that guy?" he said to the doorkeeper after he had closed the door.

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"Some nut to see Miss Waring," the doorkeeper replied weakly. "He was going to kill me when I let him in."

"Well, I saved your life, Henry; don't forget that." The stage-hand laughed as he passed in.

There was a bill in Peter's hand as he approached the doorkeeper. The latter was trying to regain his usual poise, but he was breathing heavily.

"Do you happen to know the young man who just left us so hurriedly?" Peter asked.

The doorkeeper started to scowl, saw the bill and permitted his face to relax into a grin.

"No, sir," he answered respectfully. "Never saw him before in my life that I can remember." Peter gave him the bill, which he took with an admiring, "Thank you, sir."

"I suppose this sort of thing occurs quite often, doesn't it?" inquired Peter pleasantly.

The doorkeeper shook his head.

"No, sir; not at this theatre. You see, we don't put on the kind of shows that the johnnies want to see. Musical comedies is their meat."

"But Miss Waring—" began Peter when the door-man interrupted him.

"You're the first"—he made a slight pause—"gentleman that's ever seen the inside of her dressing-room in this theatre, except the manager, Mr. Winthrop. Not that she's up-stage or anything like that," he added hastily. "She's stuck on her work, and she don't want people bothering her. Half the time she goes home through the front of the house." He looked at Peter with sudden interest. "You must know her pretty well," he said politely. He seemed to have dropped his stage-door manner now and was quite human and clearly intelligible.

"No," replied Peter; "I'm not well acquainted with her. My visit was more or less in the nature of business." He moved toward the door. "Good-night, and thank you very much," he said, as he left the theatre.

"A regular guy," mused the door-man, as he slumped into his chair and tucked Peter's gift into his vest pocket.

Peter stood at the stage entrance a moment looking up and down the street. The young man whose intentions had been so unceremoniously checked was nowhere in sight. His sojourn in the sacred precincts had been brief, but Peter had rightly appraised him as a prodigal of good family in the process of sowing a third crop of wild oats.

Hollow-eyed and bearing the unmistakable marks of dissipation, he was still handsome, but indulgence had stamped its brutish imprint too deeply upon him, Peter thought, for even right living ever to eradicate.

Why had he chosen, Peter wondered, to focus his attentions upon a woman of Gloria Waring's reputation? The answer came when he was half-way to the front entrance and caused him to stop and curse himself for his lack of perception. It was the boy she had told him about, of course, and he was still on the toboggan and sliding fast.

What a fool! He might have been of service to the youth. At least he might, for the sake of the girl who loved him, have gotten him home and into a cold tub.

An usher dashed out of the theatre as Peter was about to enter, looked wildly up and down the street and then made off as fast as his legs could carry him toward Broadway. There were more ushers in the lobby who, with the assistance of the ticket-seller, were trying to eject some flying legs and arms attached to a body that seemed endowed with the strength of Samson. A voluptuously beautiful creature of the vampire type stood by and watched the wordless battle. Except for the noise of sliding feet, the struggle was proceeding in silence. Peter stopped it with a word.

"Dick!" he cried sharply. Activities halted immediately. Peter advanced toward the cause of the combat, the youth whose physical exertions had been briefer and less successful in another department of the theatre.

The handsome head snapped back and the blue eyes stared glassily at Peter. He had forgotten entirely his recent antagonists, and was now concentrating on an effort to present a dignity to the man who had called his name. Moistening his dry, discolored lips, he gazed at Peter in drunken gravity and said loftily:

"Can't place you, m'friend—can't place you 'tall."

Peter took him gently by the arm and whispered:

"For Miss Waring's sake, I want you to let me take you home."

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Teddy tried to stop him as he rushed toward the girl in the doorway, but he brushed her aside and went on.

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He wagged his head slowly, alcoholic tears filling his eyes.

"She's only friend I ever had," he sniveled, then, as if remembering the enormity of a great offense, he drew himself up and removed Peter's hand from his arm. "Wouldn't see me—wouldn't answer m'letter"—he choked—"wouldn't even lend me miserable thousand—me, her old playfellow that's going to be millionaire."

He threw up his arms at the last word in an extravagant gesture and nearly fell over. The woman, who had been whispering to the ticket-seller and the ushers, and watching Peter with the suspicion of her kind at the same time, came to his aid with a possessive arm.

"I'll take care of him," she purred to Peter. "He's all right now, and he'll be safe with me."

"Good sport!" gurgled the youth. "We're going be married when I get m'million. Shake hands with Teddy Lamont, m'*fiancée* —queen of 'em all!" Then his head dropped forward on his chest.

Peter watched the formality and said quietly:

"I shall be glad to relieve you of the responsibility of caring for him if you will permit me."

The woman treated Peter to a slow-closing eye.

"You heard what he said, didn't you?" she inquired acidly. "The happy event takes place in the morning if he's sober enough to talk. Come on, kid; the gang will be waiting for us."

"Here's his hat," said the ticket-seller.

She snatched it and clapped it on the sagging head, and managed after some difficulty to get her burden into a waiting taxi just as the usher returned with a policeman.

"It's all over, Tom," chuckled the ticket-seller. "He was a rough guy while he lasted, but he's Teddy Lamont's now. There they go—Teddy and her millionaire kid."

"She's a bad egg," growled the policeman.

"It wouldn't surprise me if one of her dupes put a bullet in her one of these fine nights."

"Some gold-digger, I'll tell the world," responded the ticket-seller.

"You said it," agreed the policeman and proceeded to outline her lurid pedigree.

Peter, scribbling rapidly in a note-book, listened in. It was going to be more for the boy than he thought—the boy that Gloria Waring had loved all her life. He regretted his feeble attempt at a rescue. He might have stuck to him, even at the expense of a scene. Well, he must be found before morning, and prevented, by force if necessary, from marrying the woman. That sort of thing had been done before, and it could be done again.

Tearing a leaf from his note-book and folding it carefully, Peter entered the theatre and called an usher.

"I want you to give this note to Miss Waring the moment she leaves the stage, at the end of the play," he instructed. "Wait for an answer and bring it to me. I shall be waiting in the lobby."

"The show's nearly over now, sir," answered the usher, as Peter shoved the note and a ten-dollar bill in his hand. "I'll hurry right back on the stage."

Peter took his seat in the box hardly noticed by the others. They were completely under the spell of a voice and personality.

When the curtain finally closed on a tragic ending, a sigh born of relaxed tension swept over the house. The lights came on and the audience rose and applauded.

"Where on earth have you been, Peter? It was wonderful!" exclaimed the aunts almost in unison.

Demands were made upon him from all sides to give an account of himself, but Peter managed a sudden and very important business engagement that would even prevent him from returning. He saw them all into the big car and went back to the lobby to wait.

The lights were being turned out and the theatre locked before his messenger returned with a note for him. He read it hurriedly.

"Has Miss Waring left the theatre?" he asked anxiously.

"I don't know, sir. She kept me waiting in the hall a long time before she gave me the note."

Peter dashed out of the lobby and round the corner. As he neared the stage entrance, he saw her entering her car. It was off before he could call, and for the second time he felt like a fool as he watched it disappear into the night.

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She had gone alone to fight for the soul of a worthless boy with the most notorious woman in New York.

IT WAS nearing midnight when Peter entered his library. Williams and Jane had not returned, for the house was dark save for the lamp burning on the library table. He was puzzled by it, feeling certain that he had switched off every light before leaving. Flinging his hat and coat on a chair, he walked over to the table and looked down at the toy pistol.

"O'Callahan was right," he thought. "It does look like the real thing." Its muzzle pointed straight at the ink-well against which leaned a bulgy envelope. He saw it and, snatching it up eagerly, opened it.

"I'll be damned!" he muttered.

She had said:

"You will find the money in an envelope on your library table. To-morrow or the day after you will discover what I took away with me."

What could she have taken that concerned the boy in any way?

And how in the name of Houdini had she managed to return the money after she had—— It was too much for Peter. Two and two were not working five this evening.

Tossing the bills on the table, he threw himself into a chair, took the crumpled note from his pocket and smoothed it out.

DEAR PETER EWING:

I thank you with all my heart for your offer to come with me to-night. I want you, but I have a dreadful feeling that something is going to happen, and I will not have you concerned in it. I may be foolishly apprehensive, but Dick is so headstrong and wild when he has been drinking that I am afraid—dreadfully afraid. He is completely infatuated with that terrible woman, Teddy Lamont.

I am determined to take him from her. The method I shall use you would despise, but, as in another instance, the ultimate good may justify it.

GLORIA WARING.

The note was not hastily written. She had given time and thought to it, even determined on a definite plan of procedure before she had started to write.

The thought that she wanted him was comforting, but what could she mean by saying he would despise her? Despise her! He adored her. She was the woman he had unconsciously been waiting for all his life, and she was in love with a prodigal who didn't care a rap for her. Rotten old world!

THE "gang" was gathering in Teddy Lamont's apartment. It was to be a merry evening. Wise cracks were already being made concerning Teddy's precious catch—he of the Golden Fleece relieved and set off with diamonds, rubies, and all things solid and substantial—the whole about to be battened down on Teddy's ship in the form of a marriage-license. Wowl Wouldn't Teddy make things hum when the vaults opened!

But there was a hitch in it. What would Tom Burleigh say, and, far more interesting and important, what could he do? He had arrived from Frisco early in the evening. He would soon learn of Teddy's intentions. She had changed her address and set up a new establishment during his absence, but the chances were great that Tom would appear before morning. He was a man of action, and the gang loved excitement. They were all Teddy's friends but—a little drama wouldn't go bad. Uh-huh!

The wise birds knew that Tom was a one-woman man and genuinely in love with Teddy. He had kept her walking the strait and narrow for a number of new moons, but Teddy, with the leash off and a boy with a million in sight, was the same old Teddy in no time at all—being in love with no one in the world but herself.

She had gone to a great deal of trouble to learn that Dicky's prospects were gilt-edged. It had cost her something, too, but she considered it money well spent to be certain that eccentric old Joshua Reynolds had left his fortune to his favorite, Dick. Even old family servants will loosen up and talk for a price. It was all over but the shouting of the marriage ceremony—if she could only keep Dicky in a genial state of intoxication. It had been difficult lately. He was getting to be a human tank and had developed a spending streak that truly had alarmed her. She was heartily thankful that his dear Gloria had turned him down flat. He was broke now and in her loving care. She would provide him with sufficient entertainment until morning, right in her own flat.

Wouldn't it be a merry wedding-party? She chuckled gleefully while Dicky snored in rhythm with the taxi-motor.

Tom Burleigh sat in his room brooding. He had heard the news, called the man who conveyed it a liar, and then knocked him

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flat. After 'phoning Teddy's apartment—her former apartment, at least—twenty times over a direct wire—no listening-in at the switch on that lady's business—and receiving the same answer each time: "The party does not answer," he began to think the story might possibly be true. Well, after all, there was but one course to pursue: to find out definitely, and now, then— He rose, thought a moment, walked over to his grip and relieved it of an ugly-looking automatic, which he slipped into his pocket. Then he put on his hat and coat and went out.

He left his taxi with instructions to wait and entered a large apartment-building. Meeting the superintendent in the hall, he inquired pleasantly if Miss Lamont still occupied her apartment.

No, he was told; she had moved away.

Of course the superintendent knew her present address.

No; the superintendent hadn't the least idea where she had moved to.

Oh, hadn't he?

Tom Burleigh slid his hand into his pocket. When it reappeared it contained a large roll of bills. Flipping a twenty from it, he inquired casually:

"Didn't she leave any address at all?"

The superintendent seemed lost in the process of thinking, during which a lady left the rear of the hall and came forward abruptly and bent down to adjust a diamond buckle on a dainty slipper.

The superintendent was speaking again, and his memory had greatly improved. The bill changed hands. As Burleigh turned to go, a well-modulated voice slightly thickened by alcohol addressed him. He stopped and surveyed the owner of it who smiled at him sweetly and said:

"You'll pardon me, I'm sure, but I can't remember Miss Lamont's new address. Cross old janitor wouldn't tell me. Could you—would you——"

Burleigh would. Did she know Teddy? No; but she knew a friend of hers, and she had asked her to meet her at Teddy's. Going to the dogs—big party—lots of fun.

The woman had dropped right from heaven. She was an angel come to serve him in his hour of bitterness. He could walk into Teddy's apartment with her and become the envy of every man there, to say nothing of sending the beautiful Teddy into spasms of jealous rage. This woman had Teddy or any woman he had ever seen lashed to the mast for looks. And clothes? She must have a million dollars' worth, and she was wearing them like a queen. Thus he reasoned and quickly.

"Listen," he said; "I've got a story to spill in your ear and it's worth listening to. We'll go to Teddy's together in my taxi, and you can hark to it on the way."

"Let your taxi go," she gurgled, "and get in my car."

"Sure!" assented Burleigh. "What's your name?"

"Edith," she beamed. "But my friends call me 'Eddie.' Last name's Quin."

"All right, Eddie—let's go!"

BEFORE the car had traveled three blocks, Eddie knew what was required of her. She must make those present believe she had fallen for Burleigh like a house afire. She must be the life of the party, but have eyes only for the man who brought her. She must not drink too much.

"Simple isn't it?" asked Burleigh.

"As A B C," she replied.

"And there's a thousand bones in it, and maybe more—do you follow me?"

"I've started to spend the money," she laughed gaily.

Some party, some little gathering of the fast and furious, with no host or hostess to guide them! There were those present who knew where the stuff was stored in every place that would open their doors to them. Parasites, hangers-on with trained legs and a song or story to swap for drink or food; race-track men, bucket-shop men, chorus-beauties, other beauties, men with money and evil desires. Jazz, color, light, laughter, dancing and booze—booze—booze. Oh, boy! All were there to do honor to Teddy and her fit lamb of the golden fleece.

And where were they? Nobody cared. But when she entered with Dicky, there was a roar of welcome and one of the quick-witted switched the jazz into "Hail! Hail! The gang's all here," and followed it up with "For she's a jolly good fellow!" They formed a ring and danced round her and her victim with joy and abandon, and Teddy's heart thumped with pride. These were her friends.

Nemesis was turning a corner, but Teddy didn't know it. Nobody had told her that

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Tom Burleigh was in New York. She thought him in Frisco.

It was time that Dicky had a drink—a long one of the kind that soothes the nerves and dulls the brain. Teddy steered him to the sideboard and mixed it herself. Dicky mustn't grow too sober until the fatal words were spoken; neither must he grow too drunk. She'd attend to the happy medium.

The thing happened when Teddy's back was turned toward the door. The sudden silence caused her to turn, and she saw it, too—the Goddess of Beauty in shimmering gold that stood smiling in the doorway. It couldn't be real. No woman could be as beautiful as that. It wasn't possible.

And then the apparition moved and swayed a little, tipped her diamond tiara at a rakish angle and, gliding over to a bald-headed broker, looked up into his face and sang,

"Just a little love, a little kiss."

A roar of delight followed that stabbed Teddy to the heart.

Who was she, and what right had she in her apartment? Just as Tom Burleigh had reckoned, Teddy flamed with jealousy the instant her green eyes saw her, and Burleigh, standing unnoticed in the doorway, chuckled. The bald-headed broker reached out and clutched the empty air, and the sprite floated to the next man, to whom she sang the second line of the song. On she went from one to the other, a spirit more potent to excite and intoxicate than anything Teddy could serve. Not a man touched her. She was too quick for any of them—at last, she glided to the middle of the floor, and poised as still as a butterfly upon a flower, then whirled to Burleigh and threw herself in his arms. Burleigh—and with a woman clinging to him a hundred times more beautiful than the beautiful Teddy!

Ah! Now there would be doings! Boy! It was going to be a great little evening.

ALL eyes turned to Teddy, who stood with hands on hips, trying to smile. It was a ghastly effort. What would happen next? The lamb was forgotten. The drama would be played out by the exquisite creature who had dropped into their midst from God knew where, and Teddy, on fire with jealousy, and Tom Burleigh, the discarded one, with a vision in his arms. Not so.

The lamb in a far corner, white-faced and wild-eyed, had become a lion. He stood clutching a silk hanging that ripped away in his hand, and stared with eyes filled with horror. He was sober now—dead sober—and he was terribly angry. Teddy Lamont, unable to look longer on the woman who had made her friends forget that she existed, turned away, and, as she did so, she saw Dicky's face.

It was then that the lamb roared like the lion.

"Glory!"

The roar rose above the tumult and checked it instantly. Teddy tried to stop Dicky as he rushed toward the girl in the doorway, but he brushed her aside and went on.

"Come home with me instantly!" he cried, as he reached her.

Her answer was a silly little smile; then releasing herself from Burleigh, she turned to Dicky and said a little thickly:

"Think I'm still a little Glory? I'm grown up, Dicky boy, and having lots of fun with your friends. Want to spoil my fun, Dicky?"

"Come home now," he commanded, pointing to the door, "with me."

"Isn't he funny?" She laughed. Reeling a little, she clutched Burleigh's coat, steadied herself and, swinging about, faced the gathering and held them silent. "When I was a little girl," she cried gaily, "Dicky used to growl, 'Do this!' And I did it. Then he would say, 'Don't do that!' and frighten me so terribly that I wouldn't. Isn't that funny? You see, I thought Dicky was going to be a great man—like his father!" The words held the sting of a lash and the face of the lamb became a lurid red. She went on, choking with laughter: "And now, after all these years, just as if we were little boy and girl again, Dicky boy tells me to 'come home instantly.'" She imitated his command perfectly, making a farce of it. "Isn't that"—she made a gesture of appeal—"isn't that the funniest thing you ever heard?"

There was no response.

Only the lamb, blinded by humiliation and anger, failed to realize that the laughing girl was playing a part and for a purpose. With hands clenched, he stood straight and still, waiting.

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Teddy Lamont stared incredulously, amazement superseding jealousy in her shriveled soul. It was not given her to understand the sudden and remarkable change in the weakling she thought she knew so well, but the girl, with tears in her laughter, understood and thrilled with joy to see the old fire in his eyes and hear the ring in his voice. He was suffering, bitterly ashamed, for her. She must make him suffer a little longer.

Her mirthful mood changed suddenly to gravity and injured dignity.

"How dare you?" she cried. "How dare you interfere with me?" He came to her swiftly and took both her hands in his.

"Glory, for God's sake let me take you out of this!" he sobbed in a whisper. "Now!" The moment of climax had arrived. Instinct born of handling many dramatic moments told her that.

Dicky had given her a perfect exit-cue.

She looked into his tragic face and pouted.

"Very well, Dicky, if you insists little girl must go home"—the pout changed to a silly little laugh—"little girl will go."

He put his arms about her quickly and drew her toward the door. Burleigh made a movement to interfere, but he read the message rightly in the look she gave him and halted instantly.

But Teddy, poor misguided Teddy, saw a million dollars walking away from her, and she knew it would never come back. With a snarl of rage she started toward her escaping lamb, and at the same moment Tom Burleigh's hand flashed to his hip pocket.

One of the quick-witted ones saw the movement. He was leaning against the wall, near the switch, so the shot was fired in darkness.

A scream and the thud of a falling body gave evidence of true markmanship—then pandemonium. That "each may kill the thing he loves," seemed true enough when, some forty minutes later, Teddy with her own hand switched on the lights. She was alive, but her beauty was dead. Alone, with the mocking débris of past revels on every side, she gazed in a shattered mirror and saw the deep furrow in her cheek. The beauty Tom Burleigh had worshiped he had destroyed in a moment of jealous fury. She fled with the others. It had been each for himself and the devil take the hindmost in the sickening getaway, and now, scattered about the town, minus costly outside garments and variegated head-gear, those present at Teddy's drama—or, for aught they knew, tragedy—were united in a common fear—that of the great white light of publicity.

But there had been no compelling need of haste. Neither the shot nor the scream that followed it had been heard outside the big room. Teddy's guests might have walked quietly down the stairs and permitted the tired elevator-boy to slumber on in peace.

He had wakened to the racket and mumbled a few conventional words, such as "Souse-party," "Gang of rough-necks," and so forth, but he had dropped to sleep again immediately, unenlightened as to what had occurred above him. Rackets in this particular apartment-building were too common to be given serious consideration.

IT WAS very quiet in the big, cheerful room in Gramercy Park that Dick Reynolds had avoided for months. The girl he had "rescued," had been talking to him gently for some time, and the realization that he was the rescued one was gall and wormwood to him. That she had been forced to play a miserable part in order to accomplish it didn't help matters, either. Queer lights danced before his eyes, and every now and then a strange, numb feeling would come over him. After a long silence he said:

"Glory, whatever else I've done I've never lied to you in all my life. I want you to believe me."

"I'll believe you, Dick," she replied quietly.

"I'm through, Glory — absolutely through." The strange numb feeling came again, and he waited for it to pass. "I'm going to do things—big things!" he cried passionately. "You don't think it's too late for me to try—you don't think that, do you, Glory?"

She choked back the tears.

"It's never too late to try, Dicky. But you're ill now; you need rest, a fine long rest, then——"

He stood up suddenly.

"Rest?" he cried. "I don't need rest! I'm strong. I can do——"

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She saw the deadly pallor blanch his face, and as he started to fall caught him and eased him gently into the big chair.

Reaction, collapse had come hard and suddenly after months of indulgence.

"Julia!" she cried. "Julia!"

The old servant entered quickly. She had been waiting anxiously in the hall for the doctor to arrive.

"Is—is he dead?" she whispered, looking down at the still figure in the chair.

There came a ring at the door, and she flew to open it. The doctor had come at last.

"I got here as quickly as I could," he apologized, after a glance at Dick. "I was called out after midnight, and I had just returned when your message came."

He knelt by the chair and after a few moments muttered:

"Hm. Been going some, this boy, trying to burn himself up. Vitality left though—lots of it." He rose and smiled. "He'll pull through, Miss Waring, with proper treatment. It's a hospital case, and I'll have to take him away to-night. He's got a tough time ahead of him, poor chap! Ought to teach him something."

It was three in the morning when Williams rapped timidly at Peter's bedroom door. He seemed very much upset. Upon being told he might enter, he opened the door slowly and ventured a few inches into the room. Astonishment at finding his master fully dressed and reading a book at this hour quite unnerved him.

"I—I beg pardon, sir," he stammered, "but I've just come from the telephone. A—a lady, sir—she wouldn't give me her name—insisted that I deliver a message even if I had to wake you up."

Peter tossed his book on the table.

"What was it, Williams?"

"She said to tell you, sir, that Dick was all right and that you were to come to her home in the morning and receive the stolen goods." He emphasized the "stolen goods" and regarded Peter with stern suspicion.

"Hm," mused Peter. "That's fine. Did she say anything else?"

Williams nodded.

"She said, 'Tell Mr. Ewing that I've always loved Dick as a brother, and ask him to add two and two and try and make five out of it.' "

Peter rose quickly.

"She said what, Williams? Say that again—slowly."

Williams repeated the message—the silliest, he thought, that he had ever been compelled to deliver.

Peter stared at him.

"Williams," he said, "remind me to-morrow that I have increased your wages twenty-five dollars a month. Good-night."

"Mad as a hatter!" thought Williams. "Been doing something he shouldn't." But he managed a hasty, "Thank you, sir," as he backed from the room.

Peter stood quite still after he had gone, looking at the closed door.

"It isn't such a rotten old world after all," he said softly.

Considerably later on the same morning, Peter arrived at Gloria Waring's home in Gramercy Park and found that his flowers had preceded him. He made a mental vow that a certain obscure florist would have his whole trade hereafter.

She was arranging them as he entered the room.

"They are very lovely," she said, "so fresh and sweet."

"Is our young man quite all right?" Peter inquired solicitously.

She nodded and smiled over the flowers.

"I've just had a 'phone message from the doctor. He will pull through."

She saw that he did not understand and after they were seated told him of Dick's collapse, carefully omitting earlier events.

"Ought to teach him something," Peter growled.

She nodded.

"That's exactly what the doctor said. It's my opinion that it will."

"Hope so," said Peter. "Did you meet the woman?"

She shook her head.

"I saw her from a distance, but—I was not called upon to meet her."

He sensed that she did not care to discuss the details of Dick's rescue and changed the subject abruptly.

"I was greatly relieved when Williams gave me your message," he prompted.

She rewarded him with a smile.

"It was unpardonably silly of me, I suppose, but I felt you would want to know, and I was so glad, so very glad, that I had to talk to somebody."

"Miss Waring," he responded gravely,

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"whenever you feel that you must talk to somebody, I sincerely hope you'll keep me in mind." Her eyes fell and he continued: "I was waiting up, hoping for a message, and was afraid for you, knowing you would go to some length to pull that young man's chestnuts out of the fire. I can't begin to tell you how much I wanted to be with you last night, even before I knew who Dick was, or what he meant to you, or what you had tried to do for him when you entered my home."

"Do you mean you know?" she asked incredulously.

"Everything now." He reached over to the table and picked up a sealed envelope.

"When I found this was missing from my safe, it didn't take me long to fathom your purpose in taking it. I knew then to a certainty who Dick was, and why you wished to prevent him from inheriting money that would hasten his speed downgrade. You see, I drew up Joshua Reynolds' new will two days before he died, but it never occurred to me to connect his scapegrace nephew with your erring friend until two o'clock this morning." He leaned forward and tapped the envelope with his finger. "Your idea was bully, and it might have worked out all right if Dick Reynolds hadn't been brought up with a round turn and if Joshua Reynolds hadn't made a new will, leaving all his money to some one else."

The great eyes flashed in sudden anger.

"He did that? Are you sure?"

Peter nodded. "Quite sure. I drew up the new will and destroyed the old one."

She rose quickly and started to pace up and down the room, furiously angry. Facing Peter, she cried:

"It's monstrous, cruel! He was ruining Dick with his money, giving the boy all he could spend and telling him he would leave a million at his death. Is it any wonder the boy went wrong? I was at my wit's end to know how to save him. Then I learned from your aunts that you were Joshua Reynolds' lawyer and that you kept your papers in the wall safe in your library. I reckoned on the will being there, and determined to steal it to keep Dick from getting the money until he could prove himself worthy of it. It was a mad thing to do. It took all the strength and courage I possessed to carry it through, but I did it for his sake. And now you inform me that that wretched old man had left Dick penniless when he is burning with desire to come back, to be a man and do things in the world!" She covered her face with her hands and sobbed. "Poor Dick! I'm so sorry for you."

Peter waited until she grew calm again before speaking. He had another surprise for her.

She came back to her chair presently and sat down facing him.

"Please forgive me," she pleaded.

"There's nothing to forgive," Peter smiled. "I'm quite as sorry as you are over the wretched matter, for it makes it so extremely difficult for me to say to you what I've got to say."

"Why?" she asked softly.

"Because asking a girl to marry you, knowing she has just inherited a million dollars or so is not the easiest thing in the world to do."

She stared at him.

"Peter Ewing, what do you mean?"

"Just that, Gloria Waring. Joshua Reynolds told me the awful raking-over you had given him for supplying his nephew with so much money. He laughed about it, even two days before he died. 'I'll fix him,' he said; 'and I'll pay her back for calling me a "wicked old man."' He has. He left you all his money and one of the sweetest letters I ever read."

She dropped her face in her hands and the tears came. After a while, she said in a muffled voice:

"I—I stole my own will, didn't I?"

"Yes," Peter said. "You did. It's probably the first case on record."

"It's Dicky's money, though," came in the same muffled voice. "I'll give it to him when—when he's himself again. Can't you"—she looked up suddenly—"think of a way to do that so Dick may never know?"

"Your 'wicked old man' tells you in his letter how to do just that," he answered.

"Peter," she whispered, "it's all coming out wonderfully, isn't it? What"—her eyes danced—"will your aunts say?"

"Gloria," said Peter, "you are not going to marry my aunts. You are going to marry me."

It was half an hour later when he said:

"Heart's desire, I am still wondering how you got that envelope out of the safe?"

"Ask O'Callahan." She laughed. "He'll help you in your addition. He's clever."

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The Capias

Draw Poker and a Beautiful Girl Go Far Toward Mitigating an Unjust Jail Sentence

By William Merriam Rouse

ORDINARILY, Jerry Bruce whistled while he cleaned and oiled his rifle, for not only was this a pleasant task but in general the moments were rare when he was not glad that he was alive. This morning, however, the shadow of trouble lay upon him. He kept so industriously quiet on his door-step that a chipmunk, busy with the acorns from an oak at the edge of the woods, ignored him completely.

One of Deacon Enos Hardy's fancy sheep was the cause of the trouble. The sheep was dead—and buried. Except for this basic fact, Jerry and the deacon failed to agree. It was probably true that Hardy had seen a spotted dog retreating from the body of the sheep, but it was not true that the dog had been Pepper, Jerry's hound. Pepper had been in the house that night from dark to dawn.

The deacon was wealthy, powerful and exceedingly cantankerous. Hence Pepper was boarding in seclusion with one of Jerry's friends who lived on the other side of Hump Mountain. The sheep was not paid for. Why should Jerry Bruce pay eighty dollars for a high-toned sheep which his dog had not killed? If Jerry had had as much as eighty dollars in cash, he would not have spent it that way.

The rifle had just been brought to the perfection of well-oiled cleanliness when Jerry heard the snort and rattle of a car, and looked up to see Orin Lobdell turning in from the main road. That Lobdell was sheriff of the county did not occur to Bruce at the moment. He looked upon him only as a tall man with a rounded overhang above the belt and the best developed mustaches in that locality.

As the man drew near, however, Jerry remembered that Lobdell's wife, now dead, had been Enos Hardy's only daughter. He suspected, gloomily, that he might be going to hear more about that sheep. He was.

"Hello, Jerry!" said Lobdell agreeably.

"Hello, Orin!" Bruce set his rifle against the house and moved over on the steps. "Have a seat?"

"Can't stop long." Orin Lobdell hitched up his belt and shifted uncomfortably from one foot to the other. "I've got a capias, Jerry!"

Bruce glanced up quickly. Nothing in that walrus face explained what a capias was, but the expression did not indicate that it was a blessing.

"That's too bad," said Jerry tentatively. "I'm real sorry."

"It's for you," added Lobdell.

Jerry knocked out his pipe meditatively. Then it was not one of the new diseases, after all.

"Well, Orin," he said, "I don't believe I want it."

"It don't make no difference whether you want it or not." Orin Lobdell chuckled. "And it don't make no difference whether I want to serve it on you or not. As sheriff of this county, I got to do my duty."

"Oh!" Jerry grinned cheerfully. "It's a kind of legal paper. I might as well own

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up that I didn't know whether it was a pain in the back or an automobile."

"Well, Jerry, to tell the truth I didn't know much about it myself." The sheriff changed his mind and sat down. "I'd heard of 'em, but I never had one to serve on anybody before."

"Must be it's got something to do with that sheep of Deacon Hardy's," guessed Bruce.

"Yep. That's it, Jerry."

"Well, I've been getting papers about that sheep. The constable brought some quite a while ago. The deacon sued me and got judgment, didn't he?"

"Yep. Now he's got a capias."

"All right," said Bruce, with resignation. "Let him have it. He said in the first place he'd have the law on me. It's a mean trick, but I eat and sleep just the same. I suppose if I had property he could collect that eighty dollars, but if he did it wouldn't be anything more than stealing, Orin. My dog Pepper didn't kill that sheep."

"I don't believe your dog did kill it, Jerry," replied the sheriff. "Not if you say he didn't. Your word is good with me. I've knowed you since you was knee-high to a grasshopper. But you ought to gone to court. It went by default."

"I don't care how it went, Orin. Let it go. My dog didn't kill that sheep, and I won't pay for it!"

"If that's the way you feel about it, Jerry, I'll wait for you to change your clothes and shave, if you want to, before we start back."

"Start back? Back where?"

"To jail," answered Sheriff Lobdell succinctly.

"Jail!" shouted Jerry. "Me? I haven't done anything to go to jail for, and you know it darned well!"

The sheriff sighed and hitched up his belt again.

"Jerry, this is a *capias ad satisfaciendum*," he said. He handled the Latin gingerly, but with a confidence that spoke much repetition. "It means that thou mayest take the body right along with you and keep it until you get satisfaction. I had it explained to me. Old Enos has got you by the short hair, and he can hang on, according to law, until that there sheep is paid for."

"You mean to say he can put me in jail and keep me there until I pay for his cussed sheep that my dog didn't kill?"

"Yep."

There followed a long silence. Jerry wasn't afraid to tackle the sheriff, armed or unarmed. Jerry tapered from massive arms and shoulders to feet that were as light as a dancer's feet, and as a rough-and-tumble fighter he was as good as anything that grew in the Hump Mountain neighborhood. But horse-sense conquered in the end.

"I don't suppose you can help it, Orin," he said.

"No; and I'll make you jest as comfortable as I can," replied the sheriff. "The boys that's in now don't make any kick. Course I can't let 'em go out in the daytime, because somebody'd bring it up against me next election; but I do what I can."

"All right," said Jerry. "Take it easy while I fix things up and we'll go."

"Fix everything in good shape," advised Lobdell. "I got a feeling you're going to be gone quite a while."

IN HALF an hour they started, and in half an hour more they rattled into Haleton, the dozing county-seat. The jail and the living-quarters of the sheriff were together in one small, red-brick building. For the first time in his life Jerry Bruce experienced a peculiar feeling as he looked at the bars on the windows. They had never been anything but iron rods before. Now they were a personal grievance. He followed the sheriff into the building and stopped when he did in a bare hallway.

"Rhoda!" bawled Lobdell; "where's the key?"

Jerry Bruce looked with no friendly eye upon the exceedingly solid iron grating that led into the jail proper. Then the door from the sheriff's quarters opened, and he turned. He looked straight into the most wonderful pair of smiling blue eyes that he had ever seen. They belonged to a slender girl who moved as lightly as he himself did. He forgot for an instant that he was going to jail.

"This is Jerry Bruce," said Lobdell, as he took the key. "Your grandpa's put him in with that capias thing."

Lobdell unlocked the heavy door and swung it open. Jerry stood still and smiled

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at her. People always smiled back at him, and so did she. It made her eyes still more beautiful.

"I'm sorry," she said.

"So was I," replied Jerry, "until just now."

"She's jest got home from high school," explained Lobdell. "Finished up this summer. Come on, Jerry! The boys was playing seven-up when I left. Sometimes we play a little poker. Trouble is, most of the boys is broke, and it ain't no fun playing poker with 'em."

Jerry stumbled along behind him, with his head turned. She was there in the doorway, still looking at him, when he rounded a corner. He drew a long, deep breath.

"You'll have to sleep in a cell nights," continued the sheriff, "but daytimes you can stay in the basement. I've fixed it up good, if I do say it myself. They ain't a man that's been in jail this year that won't vote for me next election."

ORIN LOBDELL was right. He had done well by his guests. There were several wooden armchairs, two or three tables for card-playing, a checker-board, playing-cards, old magazines, cuspidors, and even a rickety couch in one corner. The windows were open, and a cool breeze swept through the room. Except for the bars it might have been the office of a country hotel.

Pete Guffy was in for intoxication, breach of the peace, creating a disturbance, disorderly conduct and as many more things as they could think of. When he got out he would be all right for another six months or a year. Old Pop Durkee's well-known and spectacular temper, which the natives put up with, had led him to assault a stranger with a cane. The stranger had been mean about it, and so Pop went to jail with a light sentence. He had brought his accordion. Turk Decker, from back in the mountains, had let himself get caught in a bear-trap close to another man's hen-house. Earl Wheelock was in for non-support. Nobody blamed him, but his wife had the law on her side.

Jerry became the center of attention, for he had landed in jail by an unusual means. He hadn't done anything, and he had been locked up for it. He explained; and while he explained there was in the back of his mind a picture that had smiling blue eyes, brown hair and a kind, warm mouth. He was glad he had come. His heart even softened a little toward Deacon Enos Hardy. After all, was he not the grandfather of that wonderful girl?

Some time before noon a restlessness pervaded the smoking-room, and at the first stroke of twelve from the town clock occurred the only hasty movement that Jerry had witnessed there up to that time. It was unanimously toward the stairway. He followed the crowd toward dinner.

On the floor above two tiers of cells, a dozen in all, ran along one side of a large room. On the other side were the high, barred windows at which Jerry had often glanced carelessly in passing.

In the center of the room there was a well-scrubbed wooden table with all the accessories of eating thereon. Earl Wheelock started to go toward a barred door which now stood open. The sheriff, standing in the doorway, stopped him.

"You lost your job, Earl," he said. "You're jest about as handy waiting on table as a two-year-old bull. I'm going to have Jerry try it and see how he makes out."

"Thank goodness!" exclaimed Wheelock sincerely. "Jail wa'n't no better than being to home, with a lot of housework to do!"

"Go in there to the kitchen and get the grub, Jerry," said Lobdell. "If you don't like your job after a day or so, let me know. I don't aim to pick on nobody."

Tentatively Jerry stepped through the doorway. He halted, with a mist of joy before his eyes. The cook was Rhoda Lobdell. She smiled.

"It's beef stew to-day, Mr. Bruce," she said. "Just take it around and come back with the kettle. They'll yell for more when they want it."

For the time Jerry Bruce found him unable to speak. This was more happiness than he could digest in a moment. Somewhat dazed, he served the stew generously and returned to the kitchen. The sheriff came in.

"New waitress all right, Rhoda?" He chuckled. "It was her idea, Jerry. She said this morning you looked as though you could get through a door without falling over your own feet."

He went out again, leaving the girl's face crimson and her blue eyes dark.

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"You don't act as though you liked it, Mr. Bruce," she said. "I can try Pete Guffy now he's sober."

"Miss Lobdell," cried Jerry, "I was so happy I couldn't talk! If I can see you every day, I hope your grandpa never lets me out!"

She flashed into the pantry. When she came out she carried a handful of silver and two spotless napkins. Again her eyes were filled with their natural smile.

"You and I'll eat here, Mr. Bruce," she said. "Dad won't be here. He's going to eat dinner with grandpa and tell him you're in jail."

THAT day Jerry Bruce was as one dining with the gods. When there was no longer any dish-washing or other excuse to keep him in the kitchen, he went reluctantly down-stairs. He went with the feeling that Rhoda Lobdell knew more about him than he did about himself; somehow she had encouraged him to talk his fool head off, which he was not in the habit of doing.

Jerry sat down to smoke and dream until the ecstasy of supper-time, but things were not yet done happening to him for that day. Late in the afternoon there were steps upon the stairs—more than one pair of feet. A game of seven-up was suspended. Perhaps a new addition to the circle.

When Jerry looked, a chill seeped to the marrow of his bones. Deacon Enos Hardy stood in the doorway, regarding him with black button-eyes. His jaws worked rapidly, as they did when he was greatly angered. His gray paint-brush whiskers trembled. And when he spoke his cracked voice shook with emotion.

"So this here's what I been to all the expense of putting him in jail for, is it?" he yelped at his son-in-law. "To set on the seat of his pants and smoke and indulge hisself in the devil's pastime of card-playin'! Read pictur'-books! Put his feet up and take it easy! Be you running a jail here, Orin?"

"Now, Deacon," soothed the sheriff; "now, don't get all het up. I don't treat him no different from the rest of the boys."

"That's jest it!" Deacon Hardy's voice rose almost to a scream. "That's what I had him brung here for. I want he should be treated different. I know now why you tried to keep me from comin' to look at him!"

Lobdell wiped the beads of perspiration from his forehead.

"Everybody up round Hump Mountain knows Jerry, and likes him. I'm aiming to get reelected in the fall, and I need every durned vote I can get."

"Yes; and the furrin missionaries need every durned dollar I got, too!" retorted the deacon venomously. "They think they need it more'n you and Rhody do."

Orin Lobdell heaved a great sigh and wilted.

"Come on, Jerry," he said; but he did not meet the eye of his prisoner.

Lobdell led the way to the cells, while Deacon Hardy gloated at a safe distance. The sheriff waved Jerry into the first cell they came to. He sat down upon the steel shelf that was the only furniture. The iron door clanged and locked. The deacon looked in through the bars.

"That's what I'm payin' for!" he crowed. "I calculate he's goin' to draw the wages of sin until he settles up for that sheep and all it's cost me!"

After a moment of triumph, the deacon retired with the sheriff. Jerry made himself as comfortable as he could. Also, he started some hard thinking; and when Lobdell appeared and looked in, half an hour later, he did not speak or change his position.

"You don't feel hard toward me, Jerry, do you?" asked the sheriff anxiously.

"Depends on whether I get out of here to wait on table for supper," answered Jerry, coldly. "Depends on how I spend the evening. I don't say I'll have any hard feelings, but some of the boys up round home might, if they could see me now."

The key grated in the lock, and the bolts shot back.

"I was going to let you out," said Lobdell hastily. "You know that, Jerry. But I had to do something to satisfy that old reprobate. You just as soon hustle back in here, wouldn't you, whenever he shows up?"

"If it's any accommodation to you, Orin, I don't mind coming in here for a little while any time. Long as you treat me right, I'm willing to do all I can for you."

"We can fool the deacon," said the sheriff more cheerfully, as they started toward the congenial basement. "Say; are you fixed so you could play a little poker to-night?"

"Well," replied Jerry cautiously, "maybe I could stand a dollar-limit game."

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"Fine!" Lobdell brightened. "I'm going to enjoy having you here, Jerry."

An hour of heaven at supper-time. Again Jerry ate in the kitchen, although this time Rhoda supped with her father in their dining-room.

Then followed an enjoyable evening in the basement. Jerry had abstracted a couple of dollars from the small hoard in the lining of his coat. In half an hour he knew that he was the sheriff's master at the interesting game of draw-poker. Lobdell had no poker-face. He couldn't bluff. He was a bad loser. He played mighty close to the ground and winning a jack-pot shook his poise.

When they quit at ten o'clock Jerry Bruce was only twenty-one cents ahead, but he was satisfied. Lobdell would come back for more—and keep coming. He saw the possibility of winning enough to get out of jail, if ever he wanted to get out. Of course a man who wanted to get married would have to get out sometime for the wedding.

FOR a month after that first day, no great event shook the happy serenity of Jerry Bruce's life in the county-jail. By night he slept like the others on a not too uncomfortable bed in a cell. He had a mattress, pillows and plenty of blankets. By day he spent more and more time helping in the kitchen, and it seemed that Rhoda found more and more work for him to do there. About once a week the agitated sheriff whisked him into a cell, so that Deacon Hardy could gaze upon him there with grim satisfaction, but these periods of incarceration were short. Jerry was careless now and then and let the sheriff win a few dollars from him, but the roll of poker-money that he now carried in his pocket grew steadily.

A single one of his hours with Rhoda was worth many times the discomfort he suffered. It seemed that they had an inexhaustible number of things to talk about. He examined his hitherto careless and wholly optimistic view of his own future and felt the desire to accumulate property. At the first mention of his ambition, Rhoda exclaimed with joy. She encouraged him with definite plans until he realized that for the sake of a girl like her he would even quit playing poker.

For him her blue eyes began to soften with a light that was something more than her lifelong smile of friendliness toward the world. Jerry Bruce saw that light, and recognized it, and was awed by it, but he became helpless and tongue-tied whenever he considered taking her slender hands in his own and telling her that he loved her.

The gods do not sleep always. A humble frying-pan of hot grease shattered the inhibitions of Jerry and brought to an end, in a riot of action, the chain of circumstances that had begun with the killing of a sheep by a dog unknown.

The kitchen fire was too hot and the grease spat hissingly over one of the hands that Jerry had wanted so long to hold in his own. For a second, two seconds, Rhoda stood motionless, the suffering in her eyes calling upon him silently, mightily.

"Oh, Jerry!" she whispered. "It hurts me!"

He held her close in his arms. He pressed the burned hand to his lips. He kissed it fiercely, crying soft and broken comfortings. He looked at it through blurred eyes. It was not a serious burn—a little place as big as a half-dollar—and when the first shock of pain left her, she nestled against him like a child, contentedly.

"I love you, Rhoda!" he said.

"I love you, too, Jerry," she told him. Her arms went round his neck.

After a long time he took down her hand and kissed it again.

"It's all right now," she smiled. "I'd forgotten it."

"Everything's all right, Rhoda!"

"Yes, Jerry."

Then the sound of argument and protest came to their ears. The door into the sheriff's dining-room opened suddenly, and Lobdell stood there, with Deacon Hardy trying to crowd past him. A surprise visit.

"What—what——" Sheriff Orin Lobdell clutched at the door-casing in the impotence of his first wrath. His face grew red, then purple. "Rhoda! What be you doing? Jerry Bruce, I'll put a charge of buckshot into you!"

They had swung apart, but their hands met and clasped.

"I'm going to marry Rhoda," announced Jerry steadily.

"You're goin' to get the full extent of the law!" yowled the deacon, finding his voice at last.

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"Rhoda!" shouted the sheriff. "What you got to say for yourself?"

"I'm going to marry Jerry," she said.

"Not a dollar of my money for you, nor your pa, neither!" screamed the deacon. "Every durned cent to the furrin missionaries!"

"I won't let her marry a jailbird!" barked Lobdell.

"Whose fault is it if I'm a jailbird?" demanded Jerry. "You brought me here. I didn't break in."

"Well, you're going to get out of my jail right off!" The sheriff waved his fists wildly. "Go get your hat and get out of here! You'll never get another look at my daughter."

"You can't put me me out!" Jerry cried. "I'm in jail according to law, and I've got as good a right here as you have! I won't get out unless Rhoda goes with me to get married!"

"By crimus, I'll have you put out accordin' to law!" Deacon Hardy, pale and chewing fiercely, turned to go. "Keep him and Rhody apart till I get back, Orin!"

"Get into one of them cells!" ordered the sheriff. He snatched a rifle from the wall of the dining-room.

"I'll come back and get you, Rhoda," said Jerry, over his shoulder, "and we'll be married."

"I'll go with you, Jerry." She was pale, but neither love nor courage had left her eyes.

Then a cell door clanged viciously behind Bruce. He sat down to collect his whirling thoughts. Sheriff Lobdell placed a chair where he could command the situation, and also sat down, with the rifle across his knees. A considerable interval of time passed before Deacon Enos Hardy reappeared, shaking a document in air.

"I've got a *vacatur!*" he announced.

"What does that do to me, Orin?" asked Jerry.

"It vacates the *capias ad satisfaciendum* and puts you out of my jail!" barked the sheriff, as he unlocked the door. "Godfreys mighty! You come here and win my money playing poker, and then try to marry my daughter! You'll want to be sheriff next! Git!"

JERRY obeyed with his long woodsman's stride, although without haste unbecoming the dignity of a man. The sheriff and the deacon followed him down the corridor where he had first seen Rhoda a month before. On the door-step Jerry looked back at them. He saw that Lobdell had left his rifle inside, and a temptation smote him—a temptation not to be resisted.

"I've won enough to pay for my wedding-trip, Orin," he grinned.

That was too much for Orin Lobdell. His boot rose swiftly, and Jerry Bruce landed upon the gravel walk with force. He skidded some little distance upon his head and shoulders. As he rolled up like a wildcat, preparatory to going back, he started thinking. His thoughts brought him to a sitting posture. He wiped blood and sand from his face, and his thoughts became so pleasant that he grinned again.

"I'll be back, Orin!" he called cheerfully, as he snapped to his feet. "So long, grandpa!"

Bruce went away jauntily, even whistling to himself. After he had made his face fairly presentable in the wash-room of Haleton's one hotel, he walked down the somnolent single street until he came to a neat brass sign which bore the legend:

BENJAMIN J. FLANDERS
Attorney-at-Law

Jerry climbed a flight of stairs and knocked. A voice boomed an invitation to come in.

While Benjamin J. Flanders was examining Jerry across the top of a littered desk, Jerry was forming a mental impression himself from a long and intelligent nose, a pair of close-set dark eyes and a humorous mouth.

Jerry had had no experience with lawyers, but he had just come from a long bout with the law and he was exceedingly cautious.

"How much will it cost to talk to you for fifteen or twenty minutes, Mr. Flanders?" he asked.

"Five dollars," answered the lawyer, after a bare second's consideration. "I perceive the case has to do with an assault upon your person."

"More or less, Mr. Flanders." Jerry peeled a five-dollar bill from his now sizable roll and placed it upon the desk. The size of the roll was not unnoticed by the lawyer.

"Be seated, sir," he invited, "and state your case."

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Jerry sat down. He began with the night Deacon Enos Hardy's sheep had been killed and continued to the present moment. He left out nothing except the plans that he had for the immediate future.

"Hm," said Flanders, when he had finished. "Do you want revenge, the girl, or damages? Probably all three?"

"Well," said Jerry, "if I could get the sheriff and the deacon tangled up with the law for half or three-quarters of an hour, I could fix up all the rest of it myself."

"Hm," murmured Flanders again. "May I ask why you came to me?"

"Sure!" replied Jerry frankly. "I've heard that you were the smartest lawyer in the county."

"Didn't you know that I was going to be the opposition candidate for district attorney this fall and that we've got our own man for sheriff?"

"Maybe I did think about that."

"I perceive that you are a man of intelligence, Mr. Bruce," said Flanders, with a slight quirk at the corner of his mouth. "We will now get a warrant for the arrest of Sheriff Lobdell on a charge of assault. I'll see to it that he's taken before the right justice of the peace. We won't have the pleasure of locking him up in his own jail, because Deacon Hardy will bail him. But if he is tried in county court and your story is properly brought out, he'll be laughed out of office. The prize prisoner wins the sheriff's bank-roll and elopes with his daughter! The elopement, by the way, will be difficult——"

"Wait a minute!" interrupted Jerry. "Before I get tangled up with the law again, I want to know how much all this is going to cost me."

Benjamin J. Flanders lifted the five-dollar bill from the desk and handed it back to Jerry.

"Not one cent, Mr. Bruce," he said. "This is going to be one of the greatest pleasures of my life!"

AN HOUR later Jerry Bruce waited in the dim interior of the public garage, which was within sight of the jail. At an opportune moment he had slipped away from the turmoil he had stirred up and hired the best car in the garage, with a driver. He was now waiting for the arrest of Sheriff Orin Lobdell.

At length a man whom Bruce recognized as the deputy sheriff went laggingly up to the jail and entered. Five minutes later he reappeared with the sheriff on one side and the deacon on the other. The purpose was accomplished. Rhoda was left unguarded.

Jerry had taken the youngster who was driving for him into his confidence to the extent of a ten-dollar bill and the information that there was going to be an elopement. They drove up to the jail and left the engine running while Jerry pounded on the door. Rhoda came, tear-stains upon her face.

"Oh!" she cried. "Jerry!"

"We'll be married before dark," he told her. "Jump into the car—quick!"

"What?" She clung to him. "My clothes——"

"Never mind clothes, you blue-eyed angel!" said Jerry. "We've got to get married before your father gets over being arrested."

Without another word she ran down the gravel walk over which Jerry had skidded such a short time before. The door of the tonneau slammed. The car hit the road, with the engine purring softly and the wind whistling past their ears. Rhoda curled up against Jerry's shoulder and closed her eyes.

"I'm happy," she said.

"I'll be happier in about two hours," he muttered. "We get a license in Carthage, next township. Didn't dare to try it here. By that time the deacon will probably have your father bailed and they'll be on their way after us. Don't dare to stop in Carthage to hunt up a minister or a justice of the peace and answer fool questions. We'll climb for the Reverend Micah Holt, up in Hump Mountain neighborhood. He's queer as an old-fashioned tombstone, but he's a sure-enough minister and he's strong for weddings, funerals and camp-meetings. I guess he'll marry us."

Events succeeded each other as Jerry Bruce had hoped and planned, and duly they arrived at the weatherbeaten residence of the Reverend Micah Holt. With him Jerry had a slight acquaintance but, as they faced him and his quiet wife in the somberness of the black haircloth parlor, Bruce felt some misgiving. Micah Holt's deep-set eyes looked down upon him from a height of several inches over six feet. Up to the eyes his face was banked and concealed by iron-gray whiskers. There was

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about him a hint of the wrath to come.

"The young lady," he boomed, after long and terrible consideration, "has correctly given her age as eighteen?"

"Eighteen last spring, sir," answered Rhoda meekly.

The Reverend Micah Holt considered some more, while Jerry wriggled. Why didn't the old man hurry?

"Youth and honesty are written in your faces," said the Reverend Holt at length. "The young lady is of legal age. The license is duly made out. As there is no one here present to object I shall marry you. Mother, get the book!"

The heart of Jerry Bruce leaped with joy. Almost he could have kissed the Reverend Micah Holt. "Mother" now permitted herself to beam upon them as she got the book. The driver smiled sympathetically, and with a touch of harmless envy. Rhoda became like a rose. It was a lovely world.

THE ceremony was about to begin when through the open windows came the roar of a car—a car climbing desperately up that rough dirt road with all she had. Jerry knew well the rattle and tumult of Sheriff Lobdell's engine, and also how startlingly fast it could take the mess of scrap-iron that it carried over any road. The Reverend Micah Holt lowered his book and looked over his glasses inquiringly.

"Go on, Mr. Holt!" pleaded Jerry.

"If this marriage is divinely ordained, it will take place in spite of the powers of man or of darkness," said the minister sepulchrally. "Let us wait a moment."

The car barked and halted. Jerry groaned. Instinctively he threw an arm around Rhoda. He could feel the trembling of her body as Deacon Enos Hardy and Sheriff Lobdell plunged into the room. The sheriff carried a rifle.

"I forbid it!" bellowed Lobdell. "Rhoda, you come home!"

"On what ground, Orin?" asked the minister calmly.

"He's a jailbird!" chattered Deacon Hardy. "His dog killed one of my best sheep and I put him in jail for it! He's just got out to-day!"

"You don't mean the sheep you lost about a month ago over here in the back pasture, do you, Enos?"

"That's it! He wouldn't neither settle for the damage nor kill his dog!"

"Abe Tucker's spotted skunk-dog killed that sheep, Enos," said the Reverend Holt. "I was coming home from prayer-meeting and saw him. I hadn't heard there'd been any trouble about it."

Deacon Enos Hardy sat down, working his jaw furiously, but unable to meet this new blow with words.

"What ground have you got, Orin?" asked the minister.

"He's had me arrested for assault, and he's all set to spile my chances of reelection," answered the sheriff, grimly fingering his rifle. "Inside of fifteen minutes my deputy'll be here with a warrant to arrest him on a charge of kidnaping. That'll upset his wedding, whether it holds water or not. But my best argument is this here shooting-iron, and don't you forget it!"

"Oh, why do the heathen rage?" boomed the Reverend Micah Holt. He took a long stride, and with one tremendous hand he wrenched the rifle away from Sheriff Lobdell as he would have taken a pop-gun from a child. He tossed it out through the window.

"Peace!" he said. "Or I'll make peace! Orin, if I should marry your daughter to this young man, he and you wouldn't feel so much like sending each other to jail, would you?"

Lobdell opened his mouth, and closed it irresolutely. He toned down from purple to red. There was a flicker of indecision in his eye. For the second time that day Jerry Bruce did some exceedingly quick thinking.

"If we get married, Mr. Holt," he said, "Orin will be almost sure of getting reelected. I wouldn't want to put Rhoda's father in jail, and, besides that, I'd probably feel like spending a little money I've made this last month in rounding up the vote in the Hump Mountain neighborhood."

Orin Lobdell weakened visibly. He sat down. Deacon Enos Hardy groaned with an air of helpless resignation. Rhoda held her breath. Jerry smiled his smile. The only entirely calm person in the room was the Reverend Micah Holt.

"Mother," he said, almost cheerfully, "I had a feeling this morning I was going to use one of those new fancy marriage-certificates I just got. Hand me that book again, and whom the Lord joins together let no man put asunder, not even for a minute!"

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A Novel Complete in This Issue

The Threshing-Floor

The Impetus From the First Real Wallop that Lyn Tevis Got From Life Carried Him to China. There—— But Read This Story of How a Wastrel Found Himself.

By Will Levington Comfort

Illustrations by Lawrence Herndon

MID-AFTERNOON on an April Saturday in New York. Lyn Tevis was driving up-town, having spent the forenoon in his father's office. He had just watched the elder Tevis, whom he affectionately called "the Firm," put over a big order with the British and Colonial Hardwares, softly and without strain.

"The one morning I'm really late this week," he reflected, "the Firm holds up this Canadian buyer till I get there; then proceeds to show me how to make a kill, without smearing up the place. I wonder if he thinks I could ever make a full-podded Canadian nervous like that, for fear we didn't have horseshoe nails enough to fill his order."

Lyn was held up every block or two by traffic-halts, but his reflections were uninterrupted.

"The Firm sure keeps his bright agate nerve pointing straight up. Where does he get it, and where do I—not? If I ever put over a little hand-tooled deal like that, I'd be down bright and early Monday morning to do it again, same way—and yet the Firm never repeats."

As Lyn drove north on Madison Avenue, the traffic eased and the speed of his car quickened. It was a loose, gamy figure in gray that crouched back in the cushions, as if to keep the big gray wheel out of the pit of his stomach—a figure that wore all sorts of athletic and parlor clothes with grace and effects of his own. So far as appearances went, Lyn had a positively winning unconsciousness of himself. He had been known as an athlete from grammar school up, and was extra good at tennis, his favorite game, which he still played.

He drew up to the house of Lilian Bromley, with whom he had an appointment for the afternoon, and for marriage at some future time. From infancy these two had been playmates. They had celebrated birthday parties together; their mothers had been girl friends.

Lilian had left the house. Lyn glanced at his watch. He was a half-hour late.

"I sure do my little stunts on a slack wire," he muttered.

A chap named Garret was talking on China at Mrs. Pudrick's tea-party in West Sixty-seventh Street, and Lyn had arranged with Lilian to go, not that he was given to teas, but Miquan Sol, a Chinese aristocrat who had been his fellow student up in University Square, was to be there, and Mike had observed that this Garret knew more about China than any other white man he had ever met. Moreover, Lyn had always liked the Pudrick girls, especially the pallid Esther with a tongue in her head.

Lyn reflected. Lilian always hated to break in on a speaker's talk, especially in a

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private house when everybody was seated. She had advised their going separately to the Pudricks' this afternoon, but he had insisted on picking her up at her house. To that, she hadn't exactly agreed—knowing his proneness to be late—but had said she would watch for him from the door of a little millinery shop round the corner from the Pudricks, so they could go in together. Lyn forgot this point, however, concluding that she had gone straight to the tea-party.

The Pudrick apartment was crowded, but the speaker had not begun. Lilian was nowhere about. Esther Pudrick took him over and made a seat for him beside herself, halfway up the stairs.

"She's likely inside, holding down a chair," Lyn thought, his ears full of Esther Pudrick's talk. "Lilian will understand I can't get to her."

The thing was actually dismissed from his mind.

Garret's voice began in the front room, Esther Pudrick's last swift whispers subsiding. The speaker was already up the Yangtse, nearly to Hankow, when the door was opened and sounds from the street drowned his voice.

"What a nuisance!" Esther whispered.

Lyn tacitly agreed; then saw that the nuisance was Lilian. He couldn't get to her now. For an instant she drifted queerly—not at all like herself, the one creature, according to his idea, who never lost her head. Had any one else seen this wabble—as if she didn't know where to go?

A flash of consciousness made clear the point that this was something Lilian Bromley would be slow to forgive. Now he definitely recalled the millinery shop, and turned a bit sick. He glanced at Esther Pudrick—no look of listening to Garret on that pallid face. On the contrary, Esther's eyes literally enveloped the figure below in the hall. Lilian was rescued by Mrs. Pudrick's sister and led out of sight in prospect of a seat somewhere. Garret was now following the river up toward the cataracts.

HE JOINED Lilian in the dusk out in the clean street. Fateful April was breathing up through the granite and asphalt, quite as unconcernedly as in some hawthorn lane across in Jersey's open country. Sap was stirring in old New York's stony veins. It was lamplighting time. The street-globes looked washed, and above the west end of the street a great pure star burned in the layer of deeper purple that lay upon the afterglow. Lyn thrust his arm through Lilian's and walked close to her. He had just blown out the first long breath of a delayed cigarette.

"I'm so sorry about missing you——"

He looked down at her face. She wasn't a big girl physically—a slim, dark thing, her attractions altogether unflaring. Only a trained eye could catch a hint of certain subtle fires and frosts she was made of—eyes like Miquan Sol's, for instance, that had the great languor in them at times, eyes that could not be more than amused by anything that the world would or could do.

"Can't forgive me for being late?"

"Oh, yes. That's easy. I somehow can't forgive myself. Everything looks changed and crazy out here, as if there had been an earthquake."

"Out here in the street?"

Lilian didn't answer. He saw points of black sharpen in her eyes—danger—signs of heat and anger. But there was something else in her eyes that he did not fathom. He fell to thinking that she was making a lot out of a little mistake and that she had forgotten how to laugh lately. Once they had "laughed together all afternoon."

"Won't you tell me what else is the matter?"

"I feel it's the end of the world. I've never seen it like this. We've come to a wall—where everything ends."

Her step became slower, her face turned to study him in her astonishingly slow, nerveless way as he spoke.

"I should have met you—really wanted to—thought you must be at the house—got carried up the stairs in the tangle with Esther Pudrick. But I didn't think anything could pry us apart."

"What gives you the idea that we can't be pried apart?"

"Kids together—everything—took it for granted."

"We have taken much for granted," she agreed, "but we didn't count on earthquakes or the end of the world."

"I thought you knew that I didn't care anything about Esther Pudrick and the people there."

"Oh, don't!"

"It's a fact."

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"Why, Lyn, if you suddenly came to life for Esther Pudrick, I could respect that. But you're not—you're not alive and burning for any one or anything. I only pray I shall never think better of this, and fall to trying to piece out our life again."

He couldn't believe. Her eyes were upraised in the dusk. At the worn stone steps of her house she halted in a way that meant he wasn't to come in.

"Won't you come over and have dinner with the Firm and me?" he asked.

"No; and I won't be going with you tomorrow to Ellison's. I think I shall be going away."

"Am I not going, too? Don't we belong?"

She gave a pitiful little laugh. A sudden, swift pain jerked through his body—something about her he had never seen before. It was as if she were some other man's affianced—something new about her, and for that very reason furiously attractive—a dark, slim body with upturned face, made of lures and charms and graces he had been as one dead to before. Now that he could see it, she had changed toward him.

She was standing upon the first stone step so that her eyes were level with his. They seemed to come forward to him.

"I see better, more clearly," she was saying. "I shouldn't be angry—with a little boy like you. *'Am I not going, too?'*—a little boy, not afraid to make it hard for any one. *'Don't we belong?'*"

Her eyes still were level with his, a burning softness from them that searched him, fingered him, played about his heart—a horror back in the deeps of them, in that she must let him go, that this was the moment of all their life's undoing.

And Lyn saw, that instant, the dark fascination of her eyes—her startlingly fine command of an adorably clothed body—bare throat and lips that had a new curve, as if some one else had kissed them and left them different.

"I'm beginning to pay attention," he said, turning away.

LYN was home at six. Dinner was at seven. He could dress in twenty minutes. He felt a bit bushed, and dropped down upon a couch. His eyes roved round the walls and mantels and tables. The whole thing struck him with dull disfavor for the first time—a sort of museum for athletic trophies—bats, oars, rackets, cups, pennants and the like. He reached up, with a grunt of disgust, and shot off the lights, dropping back on the couch.

He felt that he was going to be sick, that he had taken a tough wallop that had injured him in some slow internal way. He kept seeing Lilian Bromley at the Pudricks' front door—he, high and safe upon the stairs; she like one struggling in the water. He kept thinking: "It's the end of the world. We've come to a wall where everything ends."

He heard his father's step on the way down to dinner before he jumped. The gong sounded five or six minutes before he was ready. Delay to the table was one of the things his father disliked. The fact that Beacon Tevis had a fine gift of silence about things he disliked didn't make it any easier for one to break the laws of his house.

Whether it was his lateness at dinner, or the poor job he was making of it down in the office in the few months since he had left college, or both, Lyn never found out, but that was the night when father and son had a disruptive interview. Lyn was shown up to himself as a wastrel, and the elder Tevis did it after dinner as they played a game of billiards—did it without raising his voice.

"Of course, I've wanted you to have the business, Lyn," Beacon Tevis concluded, "but these things cannot be managed haphazard. A business isn't a dead thing. I gave much to it in early days—the living best I had, and there are men who are giving the best they have to it now. You are not. The fact that you are my son must make no difference. What I've put in the business comes back to me—and to those who have put their best hours and efforts in it. I could give it to you, but you couldn't own it—like the present of a fine horse to one who cannot ride. I want you to go away, Lyn—leave all this. Go away and make something of your own—for the sake of Lilian Bromley, who is a real woman—for my sake—for your own."

Lyn put his cue in the rack after his father had scored the fiftieth point. He had nothing to say, but shook the other's hand with a smile and went out of the room. In his own quarters, the athletic trophies bored him with freshened force. There was a hot, wet feeling in his chest, as if a leak of blood

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had started—something gone wrong, at least. He put out the lights and lay on his couch as he had done before dinner. The curtain moved with the softest wind—a bit of haunting April. The telephone-bell rang. It was Miquan Sol.

"It is possible for me to come to your house at once, if convenient," the Chinese said, with his careful syllabic enunciation, and added, "There is pressure unforeseen that I return to China at once."

Miquan Sol arrived within an hour—one of the few tall Chinese seen in this country. He stood eye to eye with Lyn Tevis, but was heavier. His gleaming, unreadable face was held close to the American's for the fraction of a second.

Miquan Sol had been an extraordinary student, but no one ever caught him at it. He appeared to have time for all work and play and still time to take frequent trips away from the city. He was interested in all American athletics, but, with the exception of distance-running, had taken part only in tennis at college. His game of singles with Lyn Tevis was worth watching, though he averaged little better than one game in three with the American.

Lyn dropped back to the couch.

"Don't mean to tell me you're going back to China——"

"It is famine, my friend."

"That all?"

"Famine is—to the point."

"Look me over, Mike, and get in practise for handling the natives. I'm a famine on one side and a bubonic plague on the other."

"You would make it more hard for me to go to my country where there is no talk of jazz—"

"I am not talking of jazz, Solus, I'm talking of disease—disease."

"Tell me more, please."

"Sure! The worst thing I've got, they say, is the sleeping-sickness. Also, I'm ditched—ditched double—by Lilian and the Firm in a single day."

Now Lyn let himself talk about his horrible day. It wasn't exactly like him, but once started he said too much. The Chinese moved about the room, looking at pictures, picking up affairs from mantel and table, testing a stringless racket to see if the frame had sprung. The American sprawled upon the couch, sometimes waving a leg at the ceiling, and droning on about the evils that had befallen.

"And you never know when you come to a wall," he muttered. "You don't pay attention. One should always pay attention, Mr. Solus, and never be comfortable." Miquan's eyes turned slowly to him and then went back to a magazine-cover. "My father advises me to go away somewhere."

"You will come with me to China?" Miquan asked. "It is now nine. The last train that will connect with a steamer at San Francisco leaves in three hours."

IT SEEMED to Lyn that the thing had been decided before he thought of it. He went below to tell his father twenty minutes later, and found Miquan just taking a formal departure. Beacon Tevis approved Lyn's sudden step. The few words of father and son together were quiet and memorable. Each had matters at heart not to be trusted to words. In his own part of the house, after that, Lyn hurriedly packed his bags, but could not keep his mind to the work. Twice he started for the telephone, but halted, thinking of the way Lilian's lips had appeared to him at the moment of parting. That look of hers gave him pause, but finally, at ten, he did ring her number. He had to wait; twice the servant in her house asked if he were still waiting—then Lilian.

"I only wanted to tell you, I'm off to China to-night with Mike—yes, leaving in two hours. Thought at first I wouldn't bother to tell you, but I never started anything without telling you."

His voice stopped. He was conscious of a sort of fluttering at the other end of the line and something that sounded like,

"Oh, I'm so glad——" Then it was as if part of her words were blown away by a strong wind, until the sentences became intelligible again. "So strange—he didn't tell me! Miquan is just gone . . ." She had wished him well after that, and said good-by, quite as if speaking with an acquaintance.

Deadly virus had begun to race in Lyn Tevis' veins—Miquan just gone from her house! Why, no; it wasn't out of the question that the Chinese was the key to the whole business—not a momentary jealousy for Esther Pudrick, but a Chinese aristocrat. Lyn's face became whiter; it was harder still to keep his mind upon his bags. Why, this made matters plain about

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"You have the speed a woman should have, Miss Brundage, a speed equal to a man's, but of a different quality."

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that look upon Lilian's face when she had stood upon the lower step in front of her house their last time together—the look about her lips that had startled him so, as if they had known another man's kiss.

That night, at the train, he met Miquan, but there was not the faintest trace in his face, at least for the casual eye, of an invisible sword between them. Lyn Tevis wasn't aware that he had a code, but he had one that is a bit difficult to carry. It demanded that he keep his hells to himself. He had broken over once to-night in telling of his troubles. He did not mean to repeat.

They sat together much of the time in the same drawing-room across the continent after Chicago. Then the long Pacific passage, berthed in the same stateroom—many easy, laughing hours together, to all appearances. They went up the River to Puliencheng in Shansi Province, and as the little steamer snailed into the landing, Lyn heard an altogether novel sort of cry from his Chinese friend, who, until that moment, had stood quietly beside him. Miquan vaulted the steamer-rail to the rickety bamboo-work on the river-pier, rushed to a lordly group of Chinese standing upon the slope, knelt and clasped the knees of a high-hatted elder there.

Such was the meeting after years of the two Miquan Sols, father and son, the elder being a prince in the province of Shansi. In a separate carriage Lyn was taken to the ancestral estates of the house, on the Hoang-Ho at the edge of the native city of Puliencheng. He was also lodged later as a guest at the English Club in the foreign section of Puliencheng, where he was permitted to find himself in environment more familiar when he wished.

"It is the hope of my father that our guest may find himself in reasonable freedom," said Miquan Sol.

Lyn presently understood that his friend was soon to be sent to the famine district of the province to open a relief station in the name of his house. The first caravan was being prepared. Affairs social in far-off Puliencheng were being managed that summer by the English Mrs. Richardson, whom Lyn met immediately at one of the club's evenings for dancing.

"Fate—I feel it," said Mrs. Richardson. "This very night it shall come to pass. Don't dare to tell me you have met her already!"

"Who?" said Lyn.

"Elsa Brundage, of Boston."

"No, Mrs. Richardson."

"Patience, dear boy! Elsa's not here yet, but coming." And then, in whispered confidences, the character of the one not yet come was portrayed for Lyn's ears, as only those dare to sketch who manhandle miniature worlds and crave the larger scope: "Millions behind her, actually—Clearwater Cutlery, you know," Mrs. Richardson sketched. "Talk wherever she goes, but Elsa doesn't seem to notice. Man-hater on the outside, but the tiredest, hungriest little thing at heart anywhere. Dying for excitement, like the rest of us, only more so. Requires a style and sparkle to her excitement that nobody seems able to furnish. Superb dancer, a flying witch at tennis. Oh, yes; I knew her mother—came from Australia, but died of ennui in the midst of the best and raciest your New England society had to offer. Here she comes! Not pretty—her mother wasn't—but I have a feeling, dear boy—you'll be able to help her. There! She sees us! On her way round the world—alone."

THE young woman coming toward them had a stride not mannish or showy, not delicate or hesitant. It was altogether of itself, that stride. The rest was not challenging. The face was sallow or tanned, or both—a narrow face, eyes too wide open, something savage in the look that settled upon Lyn. Her skin was too dark for the powder she used. She looked morose.

"Sleepy little cayuse—stillest thing in the corral," sang in Lyn's mind.

Her eyes left his and turned to Mrs. Richardson, with no look of gratitude, certainly. Lyn felt somehow as if he were caught again on the Pudricks' stairway, but the amiable and boyish look on his face was not disturbed.

"Shall we sit down somewhere outside? I've heard you're also on the way to nowhere in particular," she said, as they halted under the arch to the porch.

He looked back. Music had begun. Miquan had come and waved a greeting as he stood beside an English girl named Miss Warren. Mrs. Richardson and an American oil-manager were engaged in animated conversation under the center-lights of the room. A most queer moment for Lyn Tevis.

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It was like a moving-picture, something shallow about the whole affair, as if flattened on a screen. He saw Mrs. Richardson and the oil-man raise their arms and fold into a dance. Strains of a waltz that had sounded banal to him a score of times came to his ears with a new meaning. Then he felt Elsa Brundage's hands upon him.

"Come on; we may as well."

And finally this that had been a bored, wide-eyed nonentity at his side was indubitably coming to life in his arms. He recalled something Mrs. Richardson had said about dancing and tennis in reference to this person. In part, at least, Mrs. Richardson hadn't overstated.

Up to this moment Lyn hadn't known what dancing was all about. Of course, he had thought he knew.

Every movement this Brundage girl made was familiar to him. Every whim of his, she anticipated—no effort. He felt if he decided to float over the nearest cellist, she would be in the air as soon as he, silently approving his action. Over and under all was a maddening closeness to some secret of life, which, if a man once knew, would make everything easy.

The one dismaying thing about it was that the old waltz—old as a Mississippi River steamboat—had come to an end. Mrs. Richardson's eyes were on him; Miquan's wide brilliant smile. Both seemed to say; "And you never knew before—you who dance so well? Oh, yes, it has happened before and will happen again!"

Side by side and swiftly he crossed the porch with Elsa Brundage and they were out among the lanterns. Lyn knew an indefinite fear at this moment of duplicating a failure like that at Pudrick's. The girl laughed, close to his cheek. They were moving swiftly, still like one creature, out where shadows were deeper in the garden—Lyn Tevis in a deep foreign glamour for the first time in his life.

They were half running, like two who had been driven forth from Eden. This was the Outer Darkness. Her laughter was still curiously part of himself. He touched her hand. It had an intimate intelligence. He did not close upon it. Her fingers closed upon his. He had found something which the millions keep dancing for, but never whisper—even the few who know, refusing to acknowledge to themselves.

They had reached the garden wall. They halted, and he drew her to him, but in the first breath of their lips together, the mockery filled him. At least, for him, all magic had escaped. Slowly, definitely, Lyn realized after that, that his case with Lilian Bromley had not been hopeless a moment before, but it was now.

They were sitting upon a cold, damp stone seat—two separate, distinct persons. In the breast of one was a more manful ugliness than ever had been known before. He knew a child's grief, too. If he could only go to Lilian Bromley at this instant and tell her—tell her what a fool he had been—how life had hoaxed him. A curious, throaty whisper in his ears:

"Thank God for—that much! I didn't think—it was in you!"

"China got to me," he muttered.

"Don't talk. You'll be apologizing next. Do you suppose we could climb over the wall and escape to the river—get a little boat and go and go—keep on sailing?"

BACK at his quarters at the English Club, he couldn't quite see how it all happened. It was a good deal like the wallop he had taken on that April day in New York from Lilian and his father. He lay in the dark just now in the same hopeless daze.

The core of the trouble was that he hadn't been able to tell Elsa Brundage that it was all a mistake. He had entangled himself somehow—at least, she acted so, and he had kept up a whimsical bantering, instead of setting her straight. She awakened the hell in him and confessed that that was what she had been looking for in a man. The moment of all his experience when he lost his head was the moment, apparently, of which Elsa Brundage quite approved. Apparently, also, her idea was to persevere in his society in the hope that something might happen to take the curse off another day.

He glanced sharply into Miquan's face when the latter came to the club the next day to join him at tiffin, wondering if his race to the garden wall with Cutlery Millions had started any talk. The broad face of the Chinese bloomed with rest and peace. One might as well have looked for a message on a telegraph-blank.

"Anything new from the famine?"

"That is the trouble, my friend—that

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there is so rarely anything new in the midst of a famine."

"When do you leave?"

"Within three or four days."

"I have never got it straight, quite, why it is that you go."

"The house of Miquan Sol must be represented in the midst of the agony of the people." There was silence. "One cannot say to one's friend, 'Come,' when one invites him to partake of a famine," Miquan added. "Therefore, in three or four days our roads diverge, unless——"

"Unless I ask to go along."

"Which I cannot urge you to do."

"No use to ask if you really want me or not. What happens out there—anything worth watching?"

"You would decide. The land is a funeral pyre—miles, square miles of land—a pyre upon which the bodies of one's people are burning. You have never seen the burn of hunger, never looked into the eyes of a man or woman and seen the red flames of hunger back of the eyeball? Only that to watch, my friend. I could recommend a famine for one dying to forget himself—for one who wished to blow his brains out, but knew enough to know that there is no escape that way. I would say: 'Go to the nearest famine-field. Sell all that you have and give it to the poor.' "

"What's this about knowing too much to blow one's brains out?"

"There are those—did I not say?—who know enough to know how little they know. For such, death can only come from the Lords of Life and Death—to have the true flavor. A man must be wooed *by* Death. He cannot run out to her, to know the adventure of her arms——"

"If the Firm was only here," Lyn muttered. "He used to appreciate you when you got like this."

THAT afternoon on the middle tennis-court of the English Club—the foreign set of Puliencheng well represented—there were mixed doubles: Miquan Sol and the English girl named Warren; Elsa Brundage and Lyn Tevis, who disliked mixed doubles and had never felt less like tennis or more abominably out of accord with a partner. Of this, Elsa Brundage appeared altogether oblivious. Chatter stopped; play began. The interest of the next hour hinged on the fact that the English girl, Miss Warren, had some tennis to play with and that Miquan Sol pricked up into form. At the go-off, Elsa Brundage uncovered a flash of speed, without breaking a line of grace. She did it again presently.

Miquan and Tevis worked opposite almost with the speed of singles. The Warren girl was steady and valiant, sincerely making good; but it was she of the "millions behind her" who focalized every watching eye on the lawn. As the players changed sides on account of the sun after three games—Elsa had gone round the other side of the net—Lyn heard Mrs. Richardson say for his ears, although her face was turned aside:

"Elsa has waked up. I have heard she is dangerous when she wakes up. Isn't it all very interesting?"

Another electrifying flight across the court, and Elsa dropped one of Miquan's heavy-weighted drives dead—just over the net. Finally Lyn heard laughing voices, realized that the set was over, and saw Miquan Sol standing close to Elsa Brundage, the net between them, a broad, delighted smile upon his face.

"You have the speed a woman should have, Miss Brundage—a speed equal to a man's, but of a different quality. Women used to have this speed, but long ago we began crippling their feet."

Then they were in the club's dim stone-floored wine-room. Pots of tea were brought to the different tables, but Elsa Brundage ordered claret. Tennis was forgotten: ugliness resumed its place in Lyn Tevis's mind—the amiable, boyish smile on his lips. Her presence made him feel like a malignant stranger to himself, but Elsa Brundage accepted this stranger as if he were her long-lost own.

"That Chinaman knows something," she whispered with a sideways glance at Miquan Sol a few tables away. "Did you hear what he said?"

"Yes, but Mike knows nobody ever crippled the feet of American women."

"Oh, no, dear. No American would do such a thing. The American male is so advanced." She leaned forward adding: "Your eyes are adorable—all sunny on the outside—and a scowl far back for only me to see. Were you born in April, Lynnet?"

Her claret was served; it had a wicked

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gleam from where Lyn sat. She sipped without haste, but thirstily, and he, whole-souled, plotted escape. Two or three days and he would be clear of her somehow. To be clear of himself—that was another affair. Presently the words of Mrs. Richardson recurred, as Elsa said softly, thrillingly:

"Isn't there some place where no one has been? Isn't there something that no one has done? Couldn't we go up the river—up some mountain—up in the air? Oh, do let's go—a boat, a blanket, a biplane—you and I. Were you ever so lost before—as we are—with people about?"

"SAY, look here! I'm just a poor boy trying to be respectable——"

"Poor boy! The first open door I've ever known into the Something Different. A minute of life last night as we danced, a minute afterward, a minute on the court to-day—three minutes of life. No one else ever gave me three minutes worth living. Let's play some more."

Her voice could not be heard at the nearest table; all the fire of her was under the cover of outward languor, and yet he knew a steady sense of menace. A servant filled Elsa's glass again, and she touched the stem of it without thinking. His words drawled quietly out.

"You've got me pulling leather."

For a second he smiled squarely into her eyes. The thing he had fancied as sickness was merely ennui. The boldness he had observed in her look was not the brazen kind one is sorry for in a passing face, but the sullen boldness that goes with the bars of a cage—that one sees in the quiet of afternoon on the faces of the big cats at the zoo—emptiness of a mirage.

He felt his shirt collar at the throat. It was already loose. The fixed smile stayed around his lips. Any one who had known him well would have thought him drugged. He was considering famine as the surest way out when her whisper came:

"Mouth looks as if he were about to burst into song. Eyes look as if he wanted to beat his girl. Cherub wouldn't beat her—not truly; would he?"

He tried to grip some serious words, but he had fooled with words all his life. They betrayed him now, slipped away into the old banter. Miquan and Miss Warren were coming to join them.

"We can do anything, Blossom, go anywhere," she whispered.

Two nights afterward Lyn sat on his balcony at the English Club. He had left Elsa Brundage late; he was to see her early.

"A fellow goes about thinking his lids are screwed tight," he muttered, "until somebody comes along and says: 'Listen! Hear 'em knock?' "

Lyn saw himself riding and driving and fussing about New York just a few months ago, like a half-dead fool, thinking he was alive and well. Within all the horizons of his mind, there wasn't a hope that his present carrying-on with Elsa Brundage mattered a whit to Lilian Bromley. But a score of times in the last forty-eight hours it had been almost as if he had faced Lilian in himself, a poignant accusing presence.

For the third time he went into the room and tried to sleep, only to emerge again in his night-suit, to smoke in the chilled night air. Ordinarily a man would be shivering in a minute or two, but this cold only touched the surfaces, incapable of penetrating the feverish torment within. He knew he wouldn't be able to set Cutlery Millions straight when he saw her again. Something that came with her—something she seemed to have on him—locked his lips. Her presence fanned awake within him startling propensities out of some damnable nowhere. The more he tried to escape the more she laughed. But one day more—only. He could drag through one more day. To-morrow night at this time—on camel-back to the famine-field!

EARLY in July Lilian Bromley was reading a letter from Miquan Sol, posted in Shanghai.

He does not speak of going his way alone; in fact, he has consented to travel with me to my father's house in Puliencheng. I am glad for this, though I continue to wonder how he can endure the presence of one associated in his mind with the tragic break in his life. Only a grim loyalty at the base of his character enables him to do this. We have not spoken your name——

In another room, the telephone-bell rang.

"Miss Lilian!" a servant called.

She carried the partly read letter to the telephone-table. Beacon Tevis's voice:

"I have received in this morning's mail a letter from Miquan Sol. Interesting, yes. Will you come this evening and dine with

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me? At home—or we could go out somewhere if you prefer——"

"I will come to your house," she said.

"At seven, then, Lilian; thank you."

She started back to the little room with the letter. There was a bar of sunlight on the floor in the front of the house. All unknowing, her steps avoided that. She sat down to read again, but not eagerly. It was as if there were not the faintest personal purport in the pages.

China has changed; the ships and hotels have changed. In so many faces one reads the futility of life; and yet they try so hard to cover the truth from themselves and each other—in dancing and dining and pitiful play. It is not that I am apart, watching. I seem closer than before, because this drama of Americans is alive within me. At times—to whom else could I write the secret?—I feel his father's pain and his—and yours—for you have not really given him up. Life will make the man of your dreams. Do not be cross, my friend. It is the broad-faced goose who writes.

Still holding the letter, Lilian went to a window that opened upon a dim area and thrust it up. She was panting for breath, as if she had forgotten to fill her lungs for many minutes. The air she breathed now did not satisfy. Her face turned up toward the gray walls of the next house, as one suffocating in other people's thoughts.

That evening she sat opposite Lyn's father in the dining-room of the Tevis house—sat, in fact, in the place Lyn had occupied from earliest youth. A trace darker and thinner Beacon Tevis found her in each meeting, more irrevocably locked in her own mind, which apparently was set upon slowly destroying itself and all identified with it. Dinner was over. Beacon Tevis was reading his letter from Sol:

All his easy laughing years come in good stead now, and I look to prove that the American spirit which laughs, is invincible. You would not know the look in his eye, the tone of his voice, the sudden hard grips he puts upon himself; at least, to me these are strangers in the face of my old companion of field and classroom. I have seen him holding to that whimsical humor so dear to us, when agony and dissolution looked out from behind the surface twinkle of his eyes . . .

Beacon Tevis looked up from the letter and across to Lilian Bromley's face. He looked back at the page, but did not read, his eyes finding her again with grave concern. It was to him like a face one might see from the street—the face of one imprisoned in a great house, but pressed against a window-pane on a gray and rainy day.

"What is it, Lilian?" he asked.

She started.

"Nothing. Go on!"

He pondered a moment more, then said, bending toward her:

"This letter is not of interest to you. Let us go into the other room."

"You are very kind, but do not trouble. There is nothing you can do," Lilian was saying. "It wasn't only what happened that April day. I saw all our days—Lyn and I, locked in a horrible childish box, seated together by others at tables, invited to the same places, a sort of foregone conclusion in our own and everybody's minds—and the box suddenly began to smother me. I thought I could breathe when it was broken. The engagement was broken, but I have not breathed."

The white face of Beacon Tevis bowed slowly, comprehendingly before her.

"Something terrible must be going to happen," she went on. "I hear how hideous it is, as I say it, but again and again the thought has come to me that only death or disaster would help me to see life straight again. There! It's out."

"Only emptiness can be filled," he said quietly, and added: "So you found an intolerable situation in having your future cut and dried in every one's mind?"

"Please don't try to think it out now," she said suddenly. "Your voice sounds like the family physician. What I have said is no more than one clue to the trouble. I do not feel that I've told you, or that there is any hope of telling you or any one else what is the matter."

He folded the letter, without finishing.

"Please read it if you wish," she said. "It will not matter."

"That is just it, Lilian. It will not matter. Shall we go out and hear some music—somewhere?"

She looked at him bitterly a second. With all his kindness and understanding, he was only a man in a man's world to her—an enemy, one of the suffocators. "Get up, dress and go out. That's all they think life means to a woman!"

THEY traveled north, often touching the river or a spur of the Hoang-Ho, for three full days on racing camels—until they

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came in sight of the Great Wall. Lyn's eyes for hours had filled with the monster masonry, though they were dulled almost to nonentity from fatigue.

"So that's the wall," he muttered.

"And this is the village of Lilchien," said Miquan, "the end of our journey."

"The end of the world," the American remarked, his eyes still fixed upon the wall.

"You will bid your camel to kneel, for this is the threshing-floor of the village of Lilchien by the wall, according to directions; and this is the center of our district——"

"Kneel," said Lyn Tevis. "Please, missus." The camel's mouth slowly opened for a hiss. "Please, kneel," the white man's voice resumed in a dull tone. "Having arrived, please kneel. Oh, I say, Mike; tell her in Chinese. She thinks I asked her to let me see the roof of her mouth."

In the confusion of odorous darkness and voices and faces a camel-driver came at Miquan's call. He stared up into the open tongs of Lyn's camel, accused her of unmentionable evils and she began to sink.

Lyn stood on the hard earth, trying his legs doubtfully after crumpling hours. For three days the camel-passage had found his weak spots, tweaked and stretched them, until even his brain was done out, from reporting muscular damages. He began to understand, however, that he was chiefly all in from the hectic days in Puliencheng—days more hateful to him with every passing breath, a period that ended with his running away for the first time in his life.

He didn't want any supper to-night. He was too tired.

This was but the vanguard of Miquan's caravan—ten racing dromedaries with young doctors from Puliencheng, servants and attachés from the household of Miquan Sol. To-morrow would follow twenty slower camels, with the first lighter foods and medicines for the natives; then the big caravan of freight camels with grain and provisions to establish a relief station in Lilchien. Days hence would come the bullock carts from the east, from Ningwa, the nearest telegraph station to Lilchien, and the godown center on the caravan-routes between Peking and Inner Mongolia.

Faces Lyn had seen on the way had startled him a bit. For three days he had felt the burning wind—the cruel, dry, burning wind—and seen the fields of half-high millet withering back into pale, dusty humus. Clearly, death was cheap in this country. But no man can really work out problems of life and death in his first three days in a caravan—not on racing bactrians that do their sixty or seventy miles a day. Of course a man would know a wall when he came to it—the end of the world.

He was hearing strange sounds now—moaning, yes; it was like a moaning wind, as if they had come to the edge of the sea, but it didn't smell like the sea, nothing like that, here on the threshing-floor of Lilchien.

In the next hour it was as if he were a little boy kept up late on cars, with miles of walking to do, and a father who wouldn't carry him. He had a vague memory of being called for supper and put to bed in a place so soft that he kept sinking, sinking. Then it was full daylight, and he had gained a sitting posture in the midst of his furs, after furious protests from muscles he had never located before.

WHAT he saw was like a Bible picture by an artist who could draw only one bony type of face, and use only one color of pigment to represent flesh. The faces were all pulled lengthwise, and their color was a lifeless blend of blue and gray and brown. These faces hardly moved. They belonged to people in tattered, quilted garb. Size was distinguishable, but not sex. These people had pressed close in the night. They lay and sat and stood on the threshing-floor of Lilchien.

The blue clay dried white at their feet had a suggestion about it for the eyes of Lyn Tevis this morning—that it was made of myriads of such faces broken down into dust and packed—faces pressed to the clay, rows of faces of those sitting, tiers of faces of those standing. All eyes strained his way fixedly. They looked hypnotized; only, there was a burning look back of the eyeballs, like distant forest-fires through the night.

"Famine—mm—mh," the American muttered, dropping back in his furs.

What was this taint in the air that had come to live with him—not camel-reek. He tried a cigarette, but the taint had gotten into the tobacco, or else it had fouled the linings of his nostrils. Lyn rolled over. Oh, no; he didn't want any breakfast.

"I am going to be ver-ee, ver-ee sick," he said.

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"It is shock—for the day only," said Miquan Sol. "It is the very low vibration of the famine, and the dying which smells to heaven—yes?"

"Bull's eye," said Lyn.

For hours he stared out of his tent door into the faces—strings of faces. Yes; he could sometimes forget himself in the faces; at least, he had given Elsa Brundage the slip. He didn't suffer for Lilian Bromley here, and he didn't hate Miquan Sol, but he wasn't fooled. Such were the uses of nausea. The soft rolling in of the taint covered everything else—the gruesome, metallic painting of all his tissues in stench.

The wind rose higher with the afternoon, fingered the canvas flaps, a constant muttering. Lyn watched Miquan at work outside. He idly perceived that in some inexplicable way his friend regarded this horror-eyed throng, gathering now on the threshing-floor of Lilchien, as his own children. The son of the prince was not distinguished in dress or manner from his attendants, but the natives knew him at once. Any rumpled, moaning straggler of ten appeared to know that Miquan Sol was the man of all men who had come. There wasn't much flunky in Lyn Tevis, but he wouldn't have been human had he been able to stand out altogether against the massed reverence and awe in which this aristocrat was held by his household and the natives of the province. To Miquan himself it was as if years of study in China and abroad, including an American-university course, had all been a careful preparation for this delicate and ghastly work on the threshing-floor of windy Lilchien.

Lying alone in his quarters after dark, Lyn heard the second string of camels as their padded feet swept in from Puliencheng. Miquan had brought a thick waxen candle that seemed hand-fashioned and burned with a fragrance of incense. For a while this had helped, but the nausea wrestled it down and out. The warm night wind stole in with the smell of camels and spices, even the subtly dry and insinuating breath of opium—all these were softly contaminated, losing their individuality in the prevailing fetor. Long afterward, the night silence had stolen over the threshing-floor. Lyn was in a doze when he heard the scrape of a finger-nail upon the heavy cloth of the tent opening.

"I have brought a pungent liqueur, very fresh and clean to the palate—flavor of anise. Please try."

"Thanks. I'll go you one. But what's that new sound?"

"That moaning?"

"It's different from the sound of daylight. Something like puppy cries."

"Ah, that touches the matter," said Miquan Sol. "It is like puppy cries, from the pit of the stomach—not from the throat. It is the groan of those who half sleep, half waken from the burning of hunger. Always in famine it is to be heard in the night—when one does not listen too hard—in the night where many lie in the burning from hunger. Ah, my friend, these people are the objectives of the poverty of China's soul. As such, they are my father's grief and mine. I am fixing a cord for you to pull just outside your net, here at the head of your couch. Or you may clap your hands at any time."

LYN realized that the house of Miquan Sol regarded him as a guest, even in the famine-field. He was inclined to resent this. In spite of illness, he was learning a profound respect for the famine itself. Here was something that a man could actually lose himself in—if the threshing-floor would only cease to rock. Here in Lilchien he could look at Miquan Sol without intent to kill and think of Lilian Bromley as a separate human being—albeit a bit too haunting and unforgetable—without fanning up a fiend in his breast.

"This doesn't please me, Mike," he said, in the height of the bitter daylight, the next day. "I've got to get into this game, or one of your camels will be heading back toward Puliencheng to-morrow and I sha'n't be watching her go."

"What can one do for his guest in a famine close-up?"

"Forget the guest stuff, in the first place. You might hand me an apron and a hamper with a napkin in it—patty of butter and sausage like Red Riding-hood took to her grandmother."

"You would meet the wolf," said Miquan Sol.

"How do you think I feel when these people hold out their hands to me and make mouths like a lot of young robins?"

Miquan looked distressed.

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"I will order the camel for your return," he said. "My guest cannot carry a hamper——"

"Can't have his little basket? But, Mike, there's the living remains of a Chinaman out there with a handful of cobwebs in his hand and nothing to eat 'em with."

"I might give you attendants."

"Sure! get me a wheeled chair——"

"That is what America is," said Miquan Sol. "It is to laugh!"

Hunger had parted the veils of the little Chinese huts surrounding the threshing-floor in that windy, cracked land. Lyn entered the doorless hovels with gifts of food and departed with secrets of life, not particularly to his liking. That afternoon he moved about in a revealing sort of dream. He grinned often, and wiped the dusty sweat from his eyes. Every little while he had to get away by himself—into his tent or off the threshing-floor, beyond the fresh-made graves, to the wall. Out there alone, he would get himself in hand again.

IN ONE of the huts the white man entered a big, blue-green fly buzzed in, as if he had the world to himself and hadn't any idea of working six days out of seven. In this hut, on a thin pile of bluish dust that had lost its semblance to straw, lay a man and a woman and a babe—all three alive. A half-naked tangle. There wasn't much pain. Lyn's fingers closed upon the baby's ankle. He gently pulled.

All three were young. Six eyes looked up at him, and Lyn thought it was the fear of death that suddenly filled them.

"But Mike always says they're not afraid of death," he muttered.

The bare elbows of the mother lifted like grasshopper legs and sprawled crazily over the child. For a second or two Lyn studied her, and then studied the eyes of her man—no; he wasn't a man—a father who had not yet been a boy. He pinned the American with hopeless eyes, the woman likewise.

Meanwhile, Lyn began to spoon sweetened milk into the mouth of the babe. It ran out. He tried again. A spoonful vanished and another; then there was a sick little cough and all the milk appeared again, not a drop missing. Now on the small lengthened face Lyn perceived a look that affected him like the abdominal moaning in the night—a harrowing familiarity, though his senses hadn't registered the like before. He knew it was death in the baby's eyes. He brushed the big fly from the baby's mouth.

"Come on; let's go," he said.

The fly made an appearance of complying as the man rose, but sneaked back.

That night, Miquan wrote in a letter:

> He has started to work with his hands. The people do not understand him yet. They call him the "Devil Who Laughs at Us"—the "Laughing Devil." They are used to famine, and death, but they have never been ministered unto by a man who laughs as he serves.

LYN'S thoughts banged about on rock bottom. It passed the time to fit food to open mouths. Here were dead, dying, living. If a man passed a bit of rice, for instance, at the right time to one of the living, and did it again a little later, that creature actually brightened up and lived on. Otherwise, he flattened out presently and his neighbors dragged him to the soft ground by the wall. That was the end of the world, all right—at the wall.

To save a life! They called a man a hero for saving a life back in New York. Hard to remember here—it was so simple. Here a man could save a life every few minutes. So easy, it seemed unimportant, but there must be something to it; in fact, he was quite sure. Was this making something? Was this like putting one's self into horse-shoe-nails? If he could only breathe the air and not get violent inside——

The smile hung on his lips in the dark that third night. Lyn was thinking of a secret that had come to him this afternoon—before that baby gave up its wisp of a ghost. It was while he was squeezing drops of milk into that baby's mouth—the sudden feeling that he and Lilian were together again, all being right between them—"laughing all afternoon." Something sweet about it all in that hovel—that Mr. Famine-fly wasn't in on.

Of course a man was apt to get waxen in the head here on the threshing-floor. But the fact remained that in running away from Cutlery Millions he had found something of his own to set about.

He rose and stood in the dark, wiping the cold sweat from his temples. The sound of a typewriter reached him from Miquan's quarters. At the same time, Lyn

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Tevis was struck with an idea. If Lilchien supplied a job, he wasn't minded to turn it down. He pulled a robe from his couch, drew it round him, groped on the floor with bare feet for his straw sandals and started to cross the area between the tents. On the way he found himself so entirely involved in his idea that he halted.

"This won't do," he muttered, and went back for one of the little affairs a man often hides behind—a cigarette.

Miquan Sol, perspiring under the candles, was just now rearranging letters on the table—one familiar envelope for the quick eye of the caller, though the writing was upside down, among Chinese scripts and commissary lists.

"What is this, Mike," he asked, with a yawn, "yesterday or to-day?"

"It is this morning quite early," said the Chinese.

"How long you expect to be stationed in Lilchien?"

"Until the government takes over this station, or, let us say, until the resources of my father's house are exhausted."

"Might be here until winter——"

"One cannot tell." Miquan's speech was cold and severe, lest something he said be construed as his wish for the other to stay. "In fact, these—my people—may need me until another harvest."

"Where do you get 'my people'? Cases all closed to outsiders?"

"In America, you and your father showed me the peace and opulence of a quiet home. In China, my father and I show you famine. It is poor reparation."

Lyn went to the flap of the tent and tossed away his cigarette. Queer—devilish queer—just as he was feeling right toward Mike after so many days—that the writing upside down, familiar as a haunting perfume, should catch his eye. Miquan Sol had further moved the papers on his desk as Lyn turned back.

"So you mean to keep it all to yourself—this little one-lunged famine? But I'm on the spot, Solus, with my little basket. I'm sending a cable to the Firm. I've got a piece of change to finance my own basket."

"Your own money?" Miquan asked slowly.

"Yes; but the Firm would like to get in on this, too. I've a suspicion it's his kind of a famine."

"I should not ask him. Whatever you use of your own——"

"The Firm's weak point isn't business, young sir. I let him go down-town alone right along, right down to the foot of Broadway."

Miquan stared at him a moment, then looked down at the papers upon which the candles shone. Lyn went back to his own quarters and lay without hope of sleep. The old nausea from the odors returned. The indescribable moaning was in his ears from the threshing-floor. Long afterward, outside, the slow dingy process of daybreak had begun. Once he was just slipping away from the ugliness of waking thoughts when a flap of paper was waved before his face—the writing upside down. Finally, again on the verge of unconsciousness, a voice began to paralyze his movements of escape. This was different—one voice that he might run from, but never escape.

"Lynnet—oh, Lynnet!" it called. "Wait. Wait!"

That was it. It was paralyzing him.

"Where is he? Take me to him."

Now Lyn Tevis sat up—jerked fully awake by the actuality of Miquan Sol's low answer.

"Yes; I will call him. That is his tent."

TO THE tent-opening a figure now came, glary dawn on the neck and shoulders.

"I can't see!" came the cry in a nerve-racked tone. "It's all dark in there."

"Why, good-morning, Miss Brundage"—this uttered slowly from Lyn Tevis's lips.

"There you are!" she panted, groping forward. "It's pitch-dark——"

He had not risen, but held out his hand. She knelt stumblingly at the head of his couch, all lost in fright and fatigue, like a child coming after bad dreams to its mother.

"All night on camels," she whimpered distractedly, pulling him toward her. "All night before last on camels, and before that, and yesterday. And you—oh, how could you run away?"

Sickness was rising in him, fomenting like a revolution. He pushed her from him, rose, his limbs feeling like half-dried clay.

"Good Lord!" he said. "I can't run away from myself!"

Miquan Sol standing outside, heard those words, and the light went out of his eyes.

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For the first time in all the years of acquaintance, the voice of Lyn Tevis had been stricken of all levity.

"STRINGS of faces," Lyn repeated, with a queer glance out into the sunlight, "I'm getting to know 'em apart. They all looked alike at first, like a lot of floating fishes. You see, I can't make horseshoe-nails, the Firm says, but I can carry a basket."

The white man was feeling better. The nausea was proven whipped, and his answer to the cablegram to the Firm was in. Funds had been placed to his credit in the Hongkong and Shanghai Bank for famine purposes—more if needed—and verification had come from the Tientsin branch of the banking-house.

It was the end of the first week on the threshing-floor—at breakfast-time. Miquan glanced across the area to the flap of Elsa Brundage's tent.

"And your patient this morning, how is she, please?" he asked.

"Coming through fast enough," Lyn answered. That sounded dubious, so he added indefinitely: "She's a whip. She's a wire."

"Dr. Fin calls it a fever," Miquan observed.

"Professional way to get out of it. We may as well face the worst, Mike. She's got the camels. Yesterday morning she looked out on the famine-floor and went back to bed. This morning she says she won't get up until we take away those faces. I can appreciate that. I can hear her calling now——"

Lyn had bolted, leaving his second cup of coffee.

Elsa Brundage's journey alone from Puliencheng to Lilchien had shaken her to depths not plumbed before. That part of her unduplicatable soul which had continually challenged heaven and hell for sensational adventure had been shaken out of her by the camel passage. One human face she recognized—that of Lyn Tevis. It appeared to have nothing to do with a romantic affair—at least, not in her present tribulation, with no love such as any one had heard of, certainly. To her he seemed to be all there was left to humanity—the last lone mortal for human reason and human hope to tie to.

"I don't get any better," she moaned. "I'm all bruised and pommeled. They treated me shamefully—three nights and three days—smelling those rancid camel furs, like dirty gloves, and that rack and rack. You won't run away again?"

"Sure not! Didn't you see the big wall out yonder? That's the end of all running away!"

"I don't want to look out again," she wailed in a subdued way, finding his hand to hold to. "I looked outside yesterday—miles of dirty, whimpering natives. Can't you move them away from here?"

"It's their famine," he said. "We've come to them——"

Her head rocked from side to side, and she held fast to his fingers. He could understand very well her wanting to move them away. Always before she had been able to move away anything she hadn't liked. He had suffered a touch of this fool disease himself, and had met, within seven days, the queer feeling that comes over a son and heir when he realizes that here and there round the world is a mare that money can't drive. Cutlery Millions couldn't push these faces away.

He didn't wish her the worst of it—but if she would only stay like this—at least a little longer! It wasn't so bad sitting beside a silly little sick girl. But the Elsa Brundage he had known in Puliencheng—— He needed more air at the thought. Far from ready to cope with that! Oh, yes; he could understand her sort of idea—to press back the rows of faces so she could breathe better, to blame the world because it had such things as camels in it, to feel that a Chinese famine was a personal affront.

That afternoon Lyn, glancing out of the doorway from the shadows of one of the farther huts of Lilchien, where some of the half-dead from the threshing-floor had been brought in out of the sun, saw Elsa Brundage making her way toward him, pushing away the Chinese doctor who essayed to walk at her side.

"She's a whip. She's a wire," he repeated. "I brought her on myself."

He started out to meet her, but was wicked enough to change his mind and let her find him in the hut.

"Oh, there you are! Oh, why do you stay away for hours?"

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"Little affairs of life and death. Come in. This way——"

She entered, a vague look in her eyes. She could see nothing for a moment after the glare outside. He let her come deeper and deeper into the hut.

"Where are you? This awful smell——"

"You'll get used to that in a day or two more."

"Ugh! What's that?"

"That's one of 'em. You didn't hurt him. You could step on his face; he wouldn't mind." He let her find his hand before she began to scream. "That one you stepped on is a goner already——"

"Take me out! Take me out!"

They had to cross the threshing-floor to get back to her tent—scores of still forms lying on the clay, hundreds of dusty faces and harrowing eyes. He felt her shivering, heard her moaning about a horrible dream.

"How could you? How could you?" she kept saying, as she pulled him into her tent.

"Don't you get this stuff at all?" Lyn asked genially. "I thought I'd let you see. They're dying, dying—scores of 'em, that can't make the food work, now that they've got it."

He began to feel uncertain about what he had done. A bit fresh, to frighten her this way. He remembered his own first three days.

"But why, oh, why, don't you send them away?"

"I'll speak to Mike very firmly."

"They shouldn't be here so close to us, so close to our tents!"

"Bad-mannered beggars!" he muttered. The funniest part of it all he could understand.

"Oh, won't you telegraph for a car to come?"

His closest attention was paid when she talked of going away.

"A car, you know, Miss Brundage—I've told you. Nothing but ponies can get over the Liphuah fords—ponies and camels. But Mike will make it easy for you. No hurry going back——"

"And you won't go?"

"I hadn't thought of it. You see, I'm booked for an indefinite engagement—open-air performances."

"I won't go back alone. I'll never ride camels again—never alone again."

THE bullock carts were coming in from Ningwa with tents and tent-stoves and light roofing-materials. Numerous mud walls were in process of construction in Lilchien, for Miquan Sol had already begun to prepare shelters for the rains and wintry weather.

"What these people need right now is oils," the white man said, "oils to rub in them and on 'em. I'm apt to start somebody laughing——"

The Chinese stroked his high, hairless brow.

"I care further to hear," he said.

"They'd crack open if they laughed, Mike. Never get their faces back in shape."

A half-hundred coolies and artisans were constructing, out of fallen stones from the Great Wall, two vast fireplaces on the threshing-floor for the better handling of the big soup-and-stew-caldrons. Boxes of canned meats, bags of beans, rice, and other grains were piled high.

"I wonder your father doesn't send along a tennis-court," Lyn remarked. "Say, Mike, I could just put it all over you this morning, like filling a tooth——"

A slow smile came into the Oriental's eyes.

"I would take real pleasure in being present at the time. Excuse me. Excuse me," he added, pointing to one of the carts, upon which a huge wooden packing-case was being tilted down. This box was presently opened, and Miquan drew forth first of all a great net.

"We shall fish," he said.

A rubbery smell came up to Lyn's nostrils as the wrapping paper was lifted. His eyes widened—boxes of shoes and balls, rackets, tape.

"It is not that we *must* play," Miquan said, with grave apology. "It is not that we are addicts. But for the sake of our people, that they may have something to watch—to fill the eye——"

"But your father has forgotten to send steel fence to enclose the court," Lyn managed to remark.

"Enclosure is not necessary with so many Chinese boys to bring in the balls. They will gather round the play, and the

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hard clay of the threshing-floor of Lilchien is court footing. To pass the time—you will see."

INEXPLICABLE days—summer turned hideous. Only one desire could live under the sun that baked the threshing-floor—and that was hunger. The stenches had not abated, but the restless gyroscope in the center of the white man's body had found its balance. Elsa Brundage also was sitting up, but of the man-hating girl demanding excitement and sensation of heaven as her inalienable right, not a vestige had reawakened so far.

One day as Lyn sat in one of the huts, a little drama of life and death on the floor before his eyes, the idea came that here was a chance to rouse Elsa Brundage to herself. He went to her tent, took her by the hand, saying,

"Come on with me."

She followed, murmuring, across the threshing-floor.

"Oh, I'm not going in there!" she said at the door of the hovel he had but recently left.

"Oh, yes, you are. Yes, you are," he repeated, until they were deep in the shadow. "Now tell me what you would do in a case like this?"

A woman lay upon the floor with a babe at her breast, but the babe was very scrawny and restless. It tried to nurse, but always after trying screamed and kicked back. What had interested Lyn especially was that the woman appeared to be enraged at something—not at herself, not at the baby, not at the visitors, nor the natives lying about within doors—possibly at vague gods somewhere.

"The funny thing about it is she's got ginger enough to be sore at something," he observed impressively.

"Oh, I don't care. Let me go away."

"I brought her food this morning," he went on. "She ate a little, but it doesn't seem to help. What would you do?"

"I wouldn't do anything. I wouldn't be caught with a thing dragging at me like that. I'd die first."

"He's a perfectly good little card. Look at him brace himself. He's got a fight in him, and so has his mother. I like 'em. Mostly these people give up. I tried feeding him myself," he confessed in a sudden, shy way. Cutlery Millions didn't make it easier for him. Faintly to her eyes a vague scorn rose. "The mother acted as if she thought I was giving him poison—snatched the bottle away."

"Any fool can see she wants to feed him herself."

The man's guile worked now.

"I asked Mike about it," he pursued, as if not hearing. "Mike turned poetical, said something about rivers of life going dry, but that didn't get me anything. These two ought to get together—don't you think? Can't we get a Madonna picture working out?"

"Any fool would know what to do," the girl said sullenly.

"Too deep for me," Lyn yawned, and glanced out of the doorway. "That's all I wanted, Miss Brundage. Come on; I'll see you across to your door."

She didn't move.

"Why don't you get her a glass of wine if you're so crazy about saving the world?"

"Would that help?" he asked idly.

"Help—if anything."

Lyn left the hut. He thought he heard her calling, but didn't stop. He was back within a minute and a half, lips a bit rigid to fend off his smile.

"Sorry to leave you here so long," he said, meeting the glare of her eyes.

"First time you ever came back when you said."

He drew the cork and started to fill the glass.

"Give it to me," Elsa demanded, taking the wine from his hand.

"Maybe she won't take it," Lyn suggested. "Maybe she'll think you're trying to poison her this time."

"Oh, stop talking, please!"

"Yes ma'am." But there was hardly a halt in his volubility. "Wouldn't it be great if we could get this outfit in working-order? I say; wouldn't it be great, if *we*——"

"Some more, please," said Elsa Brundage, now seated on the floor close to the mother's head.

He didn't move instantly. He appeared to be lost in amazement, not that the glass was empty but that the woman had drunk at all.

Now, out of the shadows of the hut, a man came forward on his hands and knees. His crawling ceased at their feet. He

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lifted both hands toward the wine-bottle.

"Maybe it's the father," Lyn Tevis said in a voice that belonged to the shadows. "Suppose it would help the game along to give him some?"

Evidently he was not worthy of answer from Elsa Brundage. The glass was emptied the second time. The fight was dying out from the woman's eyes. The baby cried, and she caught it to her and turned away from the visitors.

"I'll give the old man a shot for luck," Lyn was saying. "Never can tell how these things work."

"You know that bottle of wine, Mike?" he observed at dinner that night.

"Ah, yes! That bottle." There had been several since, but Miquan was nothing, if not courteous. "That was a Brundage idea. Little guy wasn't getting his nourishment. Looked like a wax candle left too close to the stove. But now he's up chirping, draped on his own spine. Father's improving, too, and Cutlery Millions steals back every half-hour or so, to see how they're coming on."

THE summer waned. Having found his job, Lyn Tevis hurled himself into it. As he worked, he felt decent. If he worked hard enough he could sleep, and to sleep six or seven hours of each twenty-four in the midst of such conditions was sheer accomplishment, fine and prime. Clearwater Cutlery was catching on. Lyn and Miquan Sol consulted her frequently. She had begun to use the significant "we," with verbs indicative, active, but the Elsa Brundage of Puliencheng had not returned to life. In this sick blister of a patch on the faded saffron skin of China, the phases of modern madness between men and women had no part. The presence of Death taught them silence—a sexless silence.

They were tired and sick, lean, darkened and dusty; Miquan was like them—the differences of race lost track of—but the work went on—three beings tranced in some furious impulses, bigger than self, like moths or bees that perform their miracles more wisely than they know.

Often the white man drifted off into sleep on thoughts of Lilian Bromley. Queer how her dark vivid face haunted him! Queer how one voice of laughter had its right of way in his being—the voice of one who had since forgotten how to laugh! Long ago they used to laugh together, like two alone on a planet. A thousand, thousand girls and women had their ways. Were the ways of one—who didn't want him—the only home for him?

And why hadn't he known all this before their lives were spoiled—before the day at the Pudricks' and a hundred days when he hadn't waked up, even to the point of keeping his word in little things? How could a man get his throw-downs all at once—if the game were fair—and not have another chance? And here he was, running round the huts and hovels of a lost Chinese village with another woman, but he didn't hate or fear her any longer. Lilchien had taken care of that. And Brundage was getting her hand in.

Half-heartedly the three played a little tennis from time to time. It did something for the people, as Mike had hinted, took them out of themselves, and the deep bogs of the one idea, the hunger-lock. One day at singles with Elsa, Lyn dared to look closely into her face, and he read there as clearly as if she had spoken the words: "I'm utterly tired, Lyn Tevis. The air is hot and dead. For the love of God let's stop!"

Hundreds of Chinese were gathered close about the court, like a wall. The people were making noises. Never was tennis played with such an audience. It was like the scrapings of an underworld, quilted in tatters—strings of faces! And the scent came to him as he passed her at the net, queer little fragrance to his nostrils, that pulled him back to the dance at the English club in Puliencheng, but all shudder and hurt from that night was eased, and he was smitten only with pity for the look he had seen in her eyes.

"Say, Elsa——"

He rarely had called her that. It was easier on the tennis-court than elsewhere.

"What?"

"I'm bushed," he said. "Let's cut it for to-day. The air's too hot and dead."

She turned back to him—an instant of big hope; then her eyes dulled in scorn.

"You're lying to me. Oh, why can't you play straight with a woman? It feels dirty to play with you, because you give me points. Go on. It's my serve!"

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She, too, had cabled for money to put into the work of the famine station. Twenty-five hundred people now on the threshing-floor, thousands of dollars from the Tevis fortune, thousands from Clearwater Cutlery pouring into the sustained flow of wealth from the household of Miquan Sol.

"It isn't playing the game to leave me out," she had said.

"You are very much a part of our work here, it would seem, Miss Brundage"—from Miquan Sol.

"I always have to butt my way in," she complained. "You laugh at me to each other and suffer it. It isn't in you to treat a woman as you would treat a man."

Her clothes were worn out. She had on a Chinese-woman's garb. Her cheeks were hollow, her skin dried. She didn't weigh more than a hundred pounds, but she was slow as Lyn Tevis or the Chinese himself to tire.

One night, when the three were at supper—it was October, but the heat of the days persisted and the rains held off, as did the aid from the Chinese government—a different murmuring reached their ears—at the moment the wind went down—a different murmuring from the threshing-floor. And Miquan Sol, back of the candles, suddenly looked like a hunched dwarf. He licked his lips, forced a smile and began to speak of his first days in college on the Hudson.

MIQUAN was still talking. Lyn's eyes roved to the spooky face of Elsa Brundage, leaning forward into the fragrant warmth from the candles. That was the moment a queer intelligence passed from one to another of the three faces—the cries continuing. The woman spoke.

"I thought after smallpox every human horror had shown itself, but there is one more, isn't there?"

They saw her thin, sun-faded lips curve into such a tender smile, as if this were the very secret of her soul—out at last, as if she had moved incognito between them all this time and now had taken off a mask. She couldn't possibly have known what she was saying exactly.

At this moment a cablegram was brought to Lyn Tevis—from his father—Lilian dangerously ill. He said nothing. There was an added point to the message.

The voice outside sounded like a young man's, very strong and terrible in its fear and pain. Lyn felt a strange pang in taking his eyes from Elsa Brundage's face. He seemed to know that there was something in that tender smile—a great meaning there for him to read, if he could only get into a still enough place to think. Lilian dangerously ill!

The cries of the man outside again shocked the stillness, broke the strangest of spells. The Chinese and the American exchanged glances. Miquan rose, excusing himself. Now Elsa Brundage and Lyn Tevis looked at each other, a vestige of that revealing smile still on the girl's face.

"Run along; don't mind me. I'm going to my tent, anyway. I know you're dying to go out there with him."

"Thanks," he said. "I'll join you in a little while."

Though still early, it had been dark for an hour or more; a young moon shone in the west. A space of thirty or forty feet had been cleared on the threshing-floor at the far end from the tennis-court. In the center of this a half-naked figure crawled and cried. It rose to its knees and whacked down again. It lifted its arms in supplication, then toppled forward, head and shoulders always writhing, keeping up its horror of cries. Lyn grabbed Miquan's arm.

"You know what's the matter with that—whatever it is. Let me in on the truth now."

"I hoped the government would get to us first," said Miquan Sol.

"Some sort of race?"

"It has been a race which would reach us first—government assistance or cholera."

"Queer!" said Lyn Tevis. "Damn queer and abrupt, eh?"

"This case is hours old. When this stage is reached, there is no mistake."

"What shall we do—carry him somewhere?"

"Where the earth is soft—by the wall. But wait! I shall carry this man."

Miquan pointed back to the candles and shoved the white man toward them. Over the heads of the people Lyn saw the opening into the tent where they had sat for supper. It seemed quite a while ago—something good and homy about it, candles warm and friendly.

Everybody's Magazine, October, 1923

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"I'll give you a hand with this chap," Lyn declared.

"Listen to me, my friend! Courage has nothing to do with cholera. Reason has nothing to do. Cholera is out of all order and reason. This is the hour I have waited for, which means separation."

"Free verse," Lyn Tevis said. "Tell that to your hon. sec., and send it to a magazine."

"Cholera has spoken, my friend. It is the hour."

Lyn laughed, his eyes still holding the far candles.

"Curtain rising to the third act, and you trying to drag me out of the theater. Why, Mike, I've paid to see this show."

"It is—that I cannot let you pay more, that I cannot let Lilchien take your life. Go to Miss Brundage. Take her to Puliencheng. Do not touch this man."

"I had forgotten Elsa," Lyn said strangely.

"Take her to Puliencheng—now!"

Lyn mused.

"Six days—there and back——"

"You will not return to Lilchien—" Miquan halted and turned his eyes away from the distant candles toward the denser shadow of the Great Wall. A plan had formed in his mind which he feared might show.

Something like reverence was in Lyn's look as he watched for an instant the struggle on the ground.

"Elsa's made it plain—she won't go alone. So for a few days, Mike, I'd better go to get her clear. I hate to do it, though."

He turned away, but recalled the cablegram he had received at supper, one sentence, especially: "Advise with Miquan." Still, he was unable to speak of that even now.

ELSA BRUNDAGE was lying on the couch in her tent, propped on her elbows, reading. Lyn bowed under the flap and stood with his hat in his hand, feeling suddenly ungainly and all too large for this place. He had already ordered the camels.

"Well?" she questioned.

Elsa had on little square Chinese boots. She clicked her heels softly together now.

"We're leaving for Puliencheng to-night."

"Oh, we are?—how nice!"

"Mike says you'd better put on fur boots. Travel all night, you understand. Cold out under the stars. Think of breathing the air again!"

"To Puliencheng?" she asked. "And fur boots—really?"

He wondered if she would begin to yell when he told her.

"Man out there—you understand——"

"Some sort of plague, Lynnet?"

He regarded her attentively as he spoke.

"Mike says all friendship ceases, when they begin to knock about on the ground like that."

She pushed herself up from the couch and her feet whipped to the floor very lightly. All the time her eyes held his face.

"And we're off to Puliencheng?"

"That's the idea."

"And you—after we get to Puliencheng—which way?"

"No time to think past getting there, Elsa."

"Ha!" she began slowly. "Busy American business man. No time to speak of plans. Little girl wouldn't understand. Be seen, not heard. You males are abysmal——"

"I'm beginning to believe it. But come on; we must go——"

She dropped back languidly under the candles and lifted the book before her eyes. He sat down in a rattan chair which one of the Chinese had made for her. It creaked despairingly. Elsa seemed trying to find her place in the book. She turned the pages.

"I've ordered the camels," he said at last.

"Dis-order them."

"But Miquan Sol has commanded us out. I'm afraid there are no two ways this time."

"I'm not sure I'd go—even if you didn't mean to ditch me in Puliencheng and come back."

Lyn braced himself.

"That guy out there making the racket—has got the cholera!"

"Never mind, dearie; it can't be any worse than the camels, and I wouldn't like it in Puliencheng—with no Lynnet to play with!"

ONE forenoon in October, several days after he had cabled to Lyn about Lilian's illness, Beacon Tevis received a cablegram from China, which read:

Cholera broken out. Lyn refuses leave. Only command from you or Lilian can help. Cable Puliencheng.

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Mr. Tevis closed his desk and office and was driven up-town. He was admitted to the Bromley house. One would have thought by Lilian's greeting that he had been gone merely a moment for an errand in the street, though he had not seen her for several days. For weeks nothing in life had roused her from the slow-destroying apathy of melancholia.

"There is news by cable from Miquan Sol this morning. Cholera has broken out in their station. Miquan is in great trouble because Lyn refuses to leave. His message intimates great danger and suggests that only a command from you or from me will help matters now."

"Why does Miquan drag me in?" asked the dry, hopeless voice.

"He believes Lyn would obey you. Miquan is suffering. His sense of personal responsibility is very keen."

Her eyes turned to his with a dull query.

"Why do you not call him—to you?"

"It was I who told him to go and find his work—I who sent him away. I showed no quarter at that time. So far as I can see, he has found his work. I have no right to interfere."

"But you would have me interfere?"

"Not unless you think best."

Beacon Tevis had been watching closely, but there was no change in the drag of her voice and the corroding bitterness that hung upon her words.

"I do not ask you to send a cable to Lyn or to Miquan Sol. It might not help. In fact, I do not ask anything. I merely offer Miquan's suggestion and another of my own."

She turned to him.

"That we rise and go to the famine—you and I together?"

He fancied a gleam of old light or new in her eyes. He had watched for it too long to be sure at once. He was too weary from experience to believe a change had come to stay. His lips continued to speak.

"I sent Lyn away to make something, and he is doing it. There on the threshing-floor, perhaps you and I may find something to grip to—something to make us forget ourselves. Meanwhile, we'll let Lyn gamble with the cholera, if you prefer——"

She did not perceive the courage required for him to utter that last sentence, but something within her at last seemed trying to force her face toward Lyn's father—away from the shadows of the wall.

LYN had left Elsa Brundage and was looking for Miquan Sol again. He followed the open way through the masses of the famine—the path Mike had followed in carrying the stricken one to the wall. The dazed, silent throng had not closed again after dividing to let their prince pass with his burden. The white man did not quite catch the significance of this yet—the first cholera-trail. He neared the wall—very dark there, the little new moon vanished behind the masonry.

"Oh, Mike!" he called.

An indescribable heaviness was in the tones that answered from a distance.

"Why do you come again? Yes; I am here, my friend."

"No excuse to stay away. Our little partner isn't leaving Lilchien——"

Queer thudding sounds had begun from the ground, not from Miquan—from the throat of the stricken one, as if he were feeling the great cold.

"Do not come any closer, please——"

Lyn found himself standing rigid in the dark, like a pointer-dog, deadly repugnance in himself. He hadn't known the actual fear of cholera until this instant.

"She's a free agent, she says," he called absurdly.

"None of us are that," answered Miquan Sol. "There are no free agents where the plague strikes. Go back. I will join you in a little while, and we shall talk——"

Lyn pushed his limbs forward. He heard the craven note in his own laugh.

"Talk!" he repeated. "Talk! Any one can talk—anywhere!"

He was frightened at the fear that now gripped him, at the thing he heard now in his own voice—new fear in the dark by the wall, which seemed to invite into his own veins the worst that could happen to a living man.

He was distracted by women's voices calling him—Lilian's, Elsa's—a psychic hubbub loosed by his slipping self-control, voices calling him from behind, it seemed, where warm candles bloomed. His knee lifted, but his foot did not reach forward. His fingers groped clumsily for a handkerchief. He wiped the film of saliva from his tongue.

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"Return to your tent, please. There is nothing to do for this man. I beg of you—go back! Do not come near me. I am fouled."

"Fouled, eh? Little old Mike! Let me see how he looks when he runs away from nursie and gets fouled."

The two men were close together. Up to this instant Lyn had only seen the other dimly, but now Miquan Sol was visible, backed to the wall, quite as if a faint gray haze had thinned the night—the high, hairless brow uncovered and standing out as if brushed with phosphor. He grasped Miquan's arm and spoke louder than necessary to cover his fear.

"Why, I'm not running away from you, Mike——"

The answer was like a pelt of sleet.

"It is one thing to be brave—another to be a fool."

Then Lyn Tevis realized that he was looking into the livid face of an Oriental, frowning hideously at him. In the shock of this he forgot cholera and his little remaining hold on himself. From a rush of hatred that had begun to accumulate on the night he left New York, he spoke in the rawest American:

"Why, you yellow aristocrat—what are you sore at?"

"Myself," said Miquan Sol.

They stood in silence.

IN THE slow and bitter astonishment of failure, in that he had again broken his code, the white man weighed the words he had just spoken. He didn't lie to himself. They might have been taken for humor—the words themselves, questionable humor of a hard-pressed moment—but he didn't forget the torrent of dirty energy that had ripped out of him with the words. Moreover, he knew Miquan Sol missed nothing like that.

He turned and walked back to his tent. Inside, he started to light a candle, but flicked out the match without holding it to the wick. Yes; he had taken a wallop again. The slow sickness formed within. He had forgotten it for weeks—the submerged feeling that came over him now, as he sank upon his couch, like being under water or in a nether plane where men didn't belong. His veins filled with sullen heat; breathing didn't satisfy. He stood up in the dark.

There was a light in Elsa's tent. He heard Mike sluicing water over himself in his quarters and speaking to his doctors and servants. He thought of cholera, of his cablegram, of Elsa's decision, of Mike backed against the wall and fouled from carrying the stricken man. But over all was the rising curse of his own failure—the youngness, the utter rawness of it.

He heard a quick step across the open space. It was Miquan coming.

"Wait! I'll light a candle," Lyn called.

The scent of antiseptic soap entered with the Chinese, who came close and said,

"I am very sorry, my friend."

"What are you sorry about, Mike?"

"That I used the word 'fool' to you. I am afraid I shall always be sorry for that."

"You needn't. You hit the fact in the case. I had an obscene funk—" He halted, not looking into the other's face. "But, hell, what's the use of talking?" he added. "I've seen it before. I'll see it again—the poor piece of work I am——"

"You ask much of yourself," said the Chinese. "Neither do I believe in words, but I would have you know, now—tonight—that I understand."

"Understand what?"

"What you said to me in anger. It is time you knew that I understand. There is work to do. There are messengers to send. Quicklime——"

"Is he dead already?"

"I was not thinking of that man but of the trail over which I carried him to the wall—the cholera-trail. Quicklime is necessary for that."

Lyn was wondering how much the other meant in repeating that he understood.

"About that cable before supper," he broke in. "I've got it here somewhere. Anyway, it said Lilian's dangerously ill—something about staring at a wall. It was from the Firm. He asked that I advise with you—some message to send her. You ought to know——"

Now it was curiously like the evening in Lyn's rooms. Miquan spoke of other things—of talks he must have with his servants and the young doctors, of announcements he must make to the natives on the threshing-floor.

"It is—in cholera—that no man can demand that another stay," he declared. "Some

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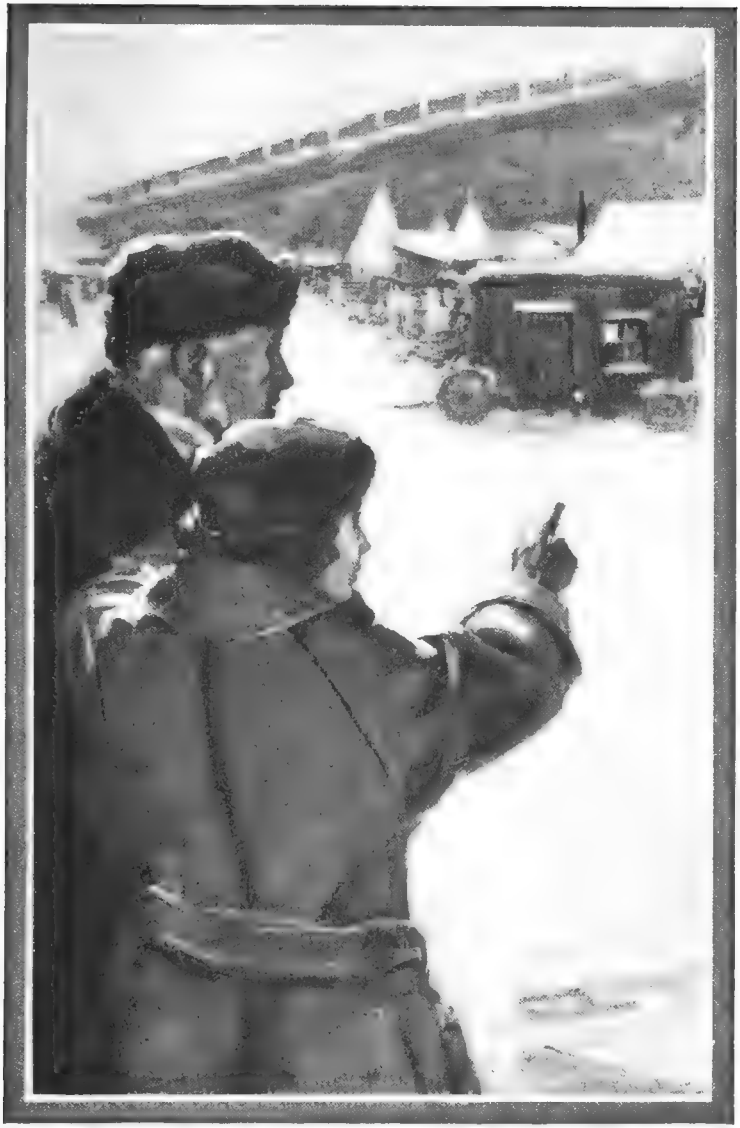

Finally the day when the two, standing afar off, were permitted to see the blur of Lyn's face at the window, and answer the tired lift of his hand.

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of my people are already preparing to depart. Cholera is a law unto itself. If one wishes to remain, he has nothing but his death to win." Miquan parted the flap of the tent.

One of the young doctors stood there with filled glass held in a napkin in his hand. Miquan spoke.

"A solution of cleansing—for the throat and nostrils. Please use—for me. And your hands—freely wash with two parts water. I will prepare the basin. Of course, the servants from my father's household are tried men. They will stay. They know no other service. Once more, please; draw well into the linings of the nostrils."

Another step outside, and Elsa Brundage's voice,

"May I come in?"

It sounded ominously pleasant, even wistful to Lyn. She entered, made for his couch and curled up there. It was like the coming of a child who hears voices of company below—a child supposed to be fast asleep. Her lips were smiling; she fixed herself to listen.

"I should like to hear all about cholera," she said.

Lyn drew back in the shadows; Miquan Sol had begun to speak very sincerely.

"In all disease there must be a nidus, a place of lodgment in the body to receive the germ, a clog of blood, a patch of degenerate tissue. I remember in America there is a saying of the police, wherever unwholesome crowds gather, threatening a riot: 'Move on! Keep moving!' It is so in the body—all must be kept active, moving, for the maintenance of health. Of course, the plague follows famine, because of the rapid waste of the body——"

"But what happens when you get it?" Elsa asked, her shoulders nestling like one interested in a story.

"There are instances of recovery," said Miquan Sol.

"I know. But before that—before you think about recovery?"

"Death comes sometimes in a short time, sometimes not for a full day. One changes, becomes unrecognizable in an hour. The bones show through the skin, and one lies queerly—like a sack. One feels a great cold from the rapid expiration of force, yet it is said that the body remains warm for an inexplicable time after the heart has ceased to beat. One dies, and the body is still. The watchers turn away, and the body has moved."

"I know," persisted the slow voice, a little tired, from the couch, "but what does one do when the disease strikes—does one know anything?"

Lyn caught Miquan's purpose now—to make such a picture that the girl would cry out to return to Puliencheng.

"Yes; and that, too, is strange. One retains consciousness—often to the very end."

"But I mean in the first hour—in the first few minutes—can one move about where one pleases? Will one's body obey?"

"Ah, perhaps!"

"Only *perhaps?*"

"Where the will is very powerful——"

There was a moment's silence, and Lyn caught a swift, imploring look from Miquan Sol, who bowed himself out, without turning his back upon them.

"That Chinaman knows something," Elsa remarked thoughtfully. "It isn't a way out one would choose; is it, old love?" She had begun to stare at him. She lifted to her elbow from the couch, but kept on looking hard at him, remarking at last: "You look bushed. What's—what's the matter?"

"Mike wants us to go. He's dying to have me take you out of here. Let's beat it, for his sake."

She rose and came to him.

"You're not sick, are you?"

"Nothing like that. Only, I've been alone with myself—rotten company."

She smiled at him.

"That's an old, old disease. Come over here to the couch and lie down. Oh, don't be afraid. I won't touch you. Listen to them moaning! I can see their phantom mouths. And here we are—away off here—alone! We did get somewhere no one had been—didn't we?—doing something that hadn't been done. But what a ghastly way to go out—sort of spoils the picture, doesn't it?"

DAYS became routine days again—the drag of wind and dust, the bitterness of a paling sky and southerly sinking sun—shorter, cooler days, longer, colder nights.

For a time they had dared to hope that cholera had come and gone with the single case buried out by the wall. Six days and

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nights of silence, so far as plague was concerned, followed that first brush with the last enemy of all.

"It may be sporadic," said Miquan Sol. "There are precedents. Meanwhile, since you will not go away, let us reform our lives under the most exact rules of prevention. We will wear masks. There are bales of fresh clothing. The office of the bath shall become even more important. We shall have our food, no longer from the caldrons but from bottles and tins and foils from the outer world. We shall live upon fruits and tea prepared with our own hands——"

"Who are 'we'? " Lyn asked.

"Just this: We are," said Miquan Sol, pointing to the crowds on the threshing-floor; "we are their ministers. To do what we can for them we must take every care and precaution in ourselves."

That was unanswerable, and a rigid sort of hospital régime was under way. The three worked as one. Less and less Miquan Sol sought the company of the few remaining Chinese doctors. The curious wonder left the two men about the presence of a woman in such a place. Elsa Brundage found her most hopeless dream coming true on the threshing-floor of Lilchien—that of living with men and being treated as an equal.

One afternoon she came to Lyn's tent and found the curtain drawn.

"Do not interrupt," he called. "I am in the office of the bath."

He heard her laugh and go away. And one night she was extra lonely. For hours she had lain awake, facing something about death that was worse than death itself. She wanted a human voice to help her, and crept in to where he was sleeping, sat down in the dark, her hand upon the coverlet of his couch.

"Don't we belong, Lilian?" he drawled in dead tones, and then, "Why, Lilian, we've been laughing all afternoon——"

IT WASN'T a sporadic case—no more than a fling of rain is sporadic, though the rains be long delayed. The plague in all its reality stole upon them softly, because they had waited so long that the human heart could not continue to dwell in expectancy.

"There is left for us to keep clean only," said Miquan Sol, "the rest being on the knees of the gods."

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Lyn looked out upon the threshing-floor—lengthened faces lengthened, shadowed faces, the heaviness in the air that their nostrils were too dulled to detect, hundreds in quilted tatters of filth.

"Some knees, they must have, the gods," he said, "and some laundry for the Mother Hubbards of the goddesses."

"What we can do—that we do," said Miquan Sol. "Only an army could keep our famine policed."

It was like an ebb and flow of the tide—the coming and going of the vast throng on the threshing-floor. The cholera frightened them away, and they went forth in numbers to the empty horizons, and hunger pulled them back. Cholera frightened them away; hunger drew them back. It was like the ebb and flow of a great tide.

Once Elsa Brundage said to Lyn, as she watched the people coming in from the withered millet fields to gamble once more with the plague for a dribble of food:

"And they have told me—my relatives in Boston told me to love God. My fat and fruitful relatives would say these are heathen, that their souls have not been saved."

She began to laugh. Lyn standing near didn't like the sound of that laughter. "I wish she'd shut up," he said, but not aloud. He had a new job on his hands, a young girl from whom the crowd had just drawn back—a girl already half dead from hunger, in whom the great breaking pain had begun.

"I'll see you later," he called to Elsa Brundage.

This stricken one had a deep voice for so light a thing. Her uncovered face brushed the hard clay and lifted in slow, strange movements. From a distance one would have thought this performance a dance-ceremonial of occult significance—woman giving herself to the earth. Lyn picked her up. She was very light in his arms—dissolution that fiercely burned.

"Go back," he repeated to Elsa, the voice muffled through his mask.

But her laughter followed him; the figure writhed in his hands. The crowd opened wide for them to pass, hands no longer plucking up from the border of the path. Silence of the starving, a white woman's laughter from behind, the deep-voiced straining creature in his arms. He reached the wall at last, where the earth was black

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and soft as ashes from natural underdrainage, and placed the tortured creature down. He turned.

"In God's name, what are you laughing at, Elsa?"

"My relatives," she said. "They say our souls are saved and these are not!"

"I don't know anything about souls," he answered testily. "Ask Mike. He knows."

Then he began a foolish chuckling to himself, and bent to draw the body of the deep-voiced girl slightly away from an open grave. She was shaking her way into the hole before her time.

Elsa was closer, clutched in some private horror of her own—fascinated eyes held to the figure on the ground. It wasn't death—this horror to her—but a certain mannerism of death. The two began to walk, their backs to Lilchien and the graves. Ahead to the west, over the wall, a lilac-tinted hill lifted its top.

On they walked toward it. The mud-walled huts of the town behind them were hardly distinguishable now from the earth itself—only the tents were different. They came to the place where the Wall was badly broken by lightning or earthquake—tons of fallen stones flung out—and upon this steep, lichen-grown grade the trail of many feet of those who had passed up and beyond.

"Let's go over," Elsa Brundage said.

Lyn shook his head.

"We don't belong over there. This is the end of the world."

She raised her mask to look at him more intently.

"You wouldn't go over there?" she asked.

"No."

"Not for any reason whatever?"

"What are you getting at, Elsa?"

"I only wanted to know. You wouldn't go over for any reason?"

The body of the deep-voiced one was still when they returned to the place of graves—still, yet warm.

"Everything he said about cholera has come true, hasn't it?" Elsa Brundage asked.

Lyn didn't answer.

"That Chinaman knows something," she pursued.

THE building of shelters went hastily on. Fifty condemned Sibley tents with rusty stoves and piping, purchased by one of the Miquan Sol agents months ago in Manila, began to arrive by the bullock carts from Ningwa. With every mail fresh promises came in from the government in Peking. "Yes; government has officially been apprised of the famine and cholera conditions of the Miquan Sol private station in Lilchien. Arrangements with expedition are being"—and so forth.

Mike showed them the latest telegram.

That was the afternoon in November, when what would have been rain turned to snow on the way down, and the exodus from the threshing-floor to the shelters began. It was one thing to get accustomed to a mass of natives—hundreds unfit, unwashed, many helpless—in the open, and another to enter mud huts or circular tents, walls down, with seventeen or eighteen of the stricken lying with their feet to a red stove. Also, there were tents of smallpox, tents of typhoid, typhus and pneumonia, tents of the cholera suspects.

"Wouldn't you now—I ask you," said Lyn, "if you were a youth and inexperienced—wouldn't you answer up smart and recommend a tent for ventilation—if you didn't know any better?"

Elsa Brundage would turn away from a door or tent-flap, crying out:

"It can't be done! No one can go in there and live!" And then she would draw on her mask and enter and stay until her work was done.

Lyn looked at her, and sometimes felt companionable. The more she let him alone the more he thought of her. But he never saw her smile again quite in the same way as that night of the first cholera victim.

Once he started a foolish chuckling to himself—at what he used to think were the unalterable laws of life. Here there were no laws, and one ceased to register impressions before the tragedy of each day was rightly begun.

And a fellow was sick. It wasn't like sickness one knew outside, in the world of little laws. Here one expected to be sick, accepted it, breathed filth and vaguely remembered what he used to be. As for God, even Mike now declared he had no truck with that sort of subject.

"This is what I think," he once said sincerely; "that we are permitted to think for many years—to think that we know, and suddenly we are shown that we know nothing; but that is not the beginning of

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wisdom, as we once thought, but the end of the world, as you say."

"Regular good-night?" Lyn suggested.

"Surely!" said Miquan Sol. "For instance, one thinks one is alive, but one cannot be sure."

"One thinks one is dead and in hell," Elsa said.

"Exactly; but one cannot be sure. One cannot be sure of government, or rains, or death. We think we are here for four months, but what are months? There is in your Scripture a tale of the evil one being chained in a pit for a thousand years. What is a thousand years?"

"Four months," said the woman between them.

Thus they would talk in dead tones until some one remembered.

"How many deaths to-day, Mike?" Lyn asked, this time to break the trend.

"Fifteen. Also one Sibley tent burned, and this is said to be the eighteenth of November—but what is fifteen or the name of a tent or the date of a calendar?"

"Nothing to me," said Elsa, "but the little leather-bound brandy-flask, for instance——"

Miquan rose to serve them, but found his flask empty and went to the commissary for a three-star package.

Lyn looked up to find Elsa Brundage staring at him in the candle-light. He fancied she was disgusted about something she saw.

"You sick?" she asked.

"No. What is that—to be sick?"

"For God's sake, answer me!"

"No more rotten than usual. Are you, Elsa?"

"I don't know. I've forgotten. What's that—that noise?"

"It's Mike coming back."

They drank. Elsa drank a second time, and filled the flask from the bottle to take to her tent. Neither man spoke after she was gone. Lyn looked out to see that snow was falling.

THAT night Lyn dreamed that Lilian Bromley had come. He couldn't quite wake up—that is, he couldn't make his body move; but she came close. They laughed as they used to; she said things a man would never forget. As she went away she pinned a white flower to his shirt close to the collar, and said something about his finding this a proof that she had come——

He stepped out on to the tent floor. Daytime realities pressed round him. A horrible drop—enough to turn the edge of any man's temper, to wake to the day's work in Lilchien after such a night and such a dream.

His tent was filled with gray, lifeless cold. He pushed back the flap and saw snow on the ground. He hadn't thought he would forget a word of the dream, but all were gone. Any man would resent this. Now, in the shaft of gray from the tent-flap, he saw a bit of paper pinned to the silk coverlet of his couch. Then he felt his heart bump, actually heard its high-powered beating that followed.

He had thought it was a flower, a white flower. A white paper all the time. And this he read in the blur of faculties, the drum of pounding veins:

> Put on my fur bootees—to go out under the stars—snowy stars. *"Don't we belong, Lilian? Been laughing all afternoon!"* You're not to follow, remember! You promised you wouldn't. And sometimes with her whose name is Lilian. I think it is coming on! I can't wait to see. Oh, I didn't know anything could be so horrible—too much for me—a world of camels and cholera! You won't follow, will you, Lynnet? I'll haunt you if you do. Anyway, you said you wouldn't. Only, remember the dance at Puliencheng! Good-by—that boy!

And when he didn't come to breakfast and answered foolishly a later call, Miquan Sol entered the tent. He found the white man balled up between a dream and an actuality, between a white paper and a white flower. The Chinese listened, looked, read and understood. Then, because *he* had promised nothing, and because he did not wish to be interrupted in what he was about, he gave Lyn Tevis a shot to make him sleep, and went out alone before the threshing-floor was further tracked.

"Fur bootees," he said softly, and followed the little sharp-heeled prints to the Wall, and along the Wall away from the town to the place where the masonry had been broken. Miquan Sol began to climb, his eyes to the snowy lichens upon the stones.

Toward the top he climbed very slowly and cautiously, as one who follows a game-trail after a wounding shot. He came to the initial cleavage on the coping—a deep fissure, worn smooth and deep by erosions of

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many years. His body straightened and his eyelids squinted against the cold wind that came over the top of the Wall. He found her pressed like a bird into a hedge—in the very darkness of the fissure. He lifted the big cone of sealskin from his head.

"And she came—America came—to the top of the wall, and laid her burden down on the Great Wall, and passed over——"

Then he brought stones, working for many minutes until the sweat gleamed upon his face, and walled up the dark pocket of the fissure.

The white man was still sleeping when he returned, and Miquan Sol went to his tent and drank hot coffee and wrote a record with his own hand, sometimes pausing to dictate certain notes to his secretary.

A NIGHT or two afterward at supper. Chaos itself had boiled up in Lilchien that day. Quicklime gleamed white from the doors of many huts to the main cholera-trail that led from the threshing-floor to the pitted ground by the wall. There was nothing to do but to isolate the cases as fast as they could. The two men had worked in the mass with unscaled eyes—eyes that had already seen enough.

Queer to them without the woman at the table! It was their last night together. Mail had come for Miquan Sol.

"My father has broken training, as we would say back in America. He begs me to come in."

"You will go?"

"Go? Not now. I cannot do less than you for these, and you would not go."

"But to you in China—what's all this about disobeying one's parents?"

"Even so," Miquan laughed strangely, and continued: "We see everything differently—do we not?—upon the threshing-floor of Lilchien. From the cholera-trail of Lilchien all our laws of life look small and different—the world that we believed in, small and different? I can almost hear the roar of New York, to-night, nearer than Peking—a roar with music in it, and the broiling of steaks and chops."

"Jazz music," said the white man.

"Good, too, my friend! They are hungry there—hungry like these, our children, but hungry of the soul, too, in New York. Yes; we have played together, played and worked together—I in your country, you in mine. It is all one to-night, is it not?"

They heard the start of a man's screaming in one of the distant huts. The Chinese halted and gasped a queer frightened laugh.

"We have played and worked together—I in your country, you in mine," he repeated. "The tennis was good, but the threshing-floor is better. All the years to build a body to last for a little while on the threshing-floor of Lilchien—to build a brain and a body to walk for a little while the cholera-trail——"

"I'm not quite getting you, Mike." That was the moment that each looking into the face of the other saw something like the end. "Unless," Lyn added, "you're about to spring—to die is to win!"

"'About to spring'—is correct." Miquan's lips laughed, but there seemed a gray smear across them the color of the soup some days in the caldrons. "How infinitely flexible is your English, my friend! I should say, your American."

The white man rubbed his eyes. He rubbed them again, for they repeatedly blurred. His face didn't feel familiar. It was thick and hot, but all the intensity of his nature was pulled to study the thing in the other's face. Miquan looked smaller. His body was slightly bent over the board. He stopped his supper to begin a letter. There was something foreign, furtive in the fury he put into the writing, or possibly the fury lay in the summoning of energy to write. Miquan rose, and his hand looked old and crushed as it gripped the table. He sat down again and wrote more.

"Come and walk with me," he said at last.

They moved out into the wintry moonlight. Nothing was the same to them. Once Miquan's thick left arm thrust itself roughly round the waist of the other, and then jerked away. Lyn was seeing again that tender smile in the light of the candles, of Elsa Brundage on the night that cholera came. To him, now, it was curiously mixed among memories of New York days, where they had never been together.

They had not crossed the threshing-floor. It seemed they had never been alone in Lilchien before. Miquan appeared a foot shorter. He looked up into the white man's face; the look of a comrade went out from his eyes in a kind of swimming horror.

"You will do for me what I ask?"

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"Sure!"

"I cannot stand—only to get to the wall——"

"I wondered which one of us would crumple first——"

"To me it does not seem you have cholera to meet, my friend. There are pages on my desk—to her and to your father—pages, also, on the supper table. Read, if you please. There are no secrets. Read—then seal with wax and mail—all pages in English—on either table. In envelope addressed to your father you will see—please send!"

"You want now to be alone?"

"Yes, go. Only, send Dr. Fin to me—that I may give him a message to my father."

"God, you're an aristocrat, Mike!"

"I am pleased in your friendship. It shall go on and on——"

"Looks to me as if it were going to stop—but you know best, big boy——"

"It shall go on and on," Lyn heard from the ground, as he stumbled off. "On and on——"

Dr. Fin hastened across the threshing-floor at the single word from the white man. Lyn's hands groped over the surface of Miquan's desk, because the candles were either blown or burned out. Fumblingly he made light. There was writing in English upon some of the sheets. He had to look very close, because his eyes blurred. There was no steadying of the candle-flames, yet once the name was before his eyes—"Lilian"—in writing, not upside down.

"Of course," he muttered, "of course."

He couldn't arrange the sheets. It was enough to find the pages written in English and to put them together. The candle-flame blew unceasingly. He stared out into the moonlight through the open doorway, but his fingers fumbled the sheets of writing—thumb and forefinger entering between them. He did not forget that Mike had told him he might read.

"But, God!" he muttered. "I'm not like that."

Then he remembered that there were sheets also on the table where they had sat for supper. Queer how everybody was leaving him alone! He went to get the further writing in English and returned to the blowing candles. His hands fouled the papers. Wax and flame and envelope—hard to hold in mind all at once! His lip curled at the wretchedness of his performance, the wretchedness of all his performances. Miquan's seal pressed into the running mass. The tall body bent and swayed above. He turned the envelope over and read, "Beacon Tevis, English Club, Pulien-cheng."

"Of course!" he muttered, but did not really understand.

A caravan was coming in with Chinese strangers. Lyn slipped away. He was rambling up and down in the dark by the wall, but could not find Miquan Sol. Lanterns were about him at last, and strange faces. He was led back across the threshing-floor to the tents. He could not realize; at least, could not hold in mind that this was the first section of a government caravan come to take over the station at Lil-chien.

These strangers did not know enough to take him to the wall. He tried to tell them. They put him to bed in his own place, but he rose repeatedly, and all his furiously articulated words were of no avail. They were telling him he was not seized with cholera, but he knew better. His back was breaking, his face and neck flame. When he was left alone, he rose and went out into the moonlight, his persistent idea to go to the wall as Miquan Sol had done. The doctors found him again, and one who spoke English said:

"You must lie down, Mr. Tevis, or we shall have to shut you up. You are a sick man, you know, but not cholera, at least."

Their faces looked fresh and unwearied, like people from another world.

"I'll be good," Lyn muttered. "But what's the matter with me, if not——"

"We are not sure yet. We will get to you presently."

BEACON TEVIS and a silent, ashen-faced girl stepped from their launch to the Bund in Shanghai to learn that Miquan Sol, the younger, had died of cholera in a remote village of Shansi.

"But what of the American, Lyn Tevis?" the father asked.

No word.

Hurrying in-country—on the way up the river to Puliencheng, in fact—they learned that an American woman, Elsa Brundage,

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had succumbed to the plague which had swept the famine-station of Lilchien, but no word from the American who was with them. Days of strain in its ugliest finality for the elderly manufacturer, but in this strain, Lilian Bromley actually appeared to come back to life, rearoused by the ancient agony of the East and the return of poignant personal realizations that stopped the destroying tread of introversive thoughts.

Not until they reached Puliencheng did they hear that Lyn Tevis was still alive in Lilchien, under the care of government doctors there, that the cholera had passed him by, but not smallpox. Quarters were prepared for Beacon Tevis and his companion at the English Club while they awaited the departure of a caravan for Lilchien, and here the packet of letters, the last writings of Miquan Sol, were opened and read.

A hundred references now to Lyn Tevis, written by the hand of the Easterner, who had seemed to know how the details would be treasured—Miquan's story of his two American comrades on the threshing-floor—even to the morning when he followed the tracks of the little Russian boots across the early snow to the wall, to the top of the wall, of what he found there, and of his work with the stones of the wall.

"To think!" Lilian Bromley would say. "Only to think!"

You may sometime come to this wall, even to this village, where China has learned a great lesson in the courage of humor, where my friend forgot that he was of the West, and I forgot China and all the sober teachings of my youth in a final study of the levity of the American spirit.

Miquan told of the presence of disease—how all the maladies of the dark had roiled up to the surface in the famine concentration at Lilchien—and of the coming of cholera at the end.

One paragraph she asked for many times, and with each reading she seemed to peer deeper and deeper into life itself, into meanings which had been obscured so long—words which Miquan Sol must have written at the very last, for they saw the torture of his body in the aberration and heaviness of the lines of ink.

And this is what I see to-night, that sometime in each life one comes to the threshing-floor. I stand in silence to-night before the Plan that fixes for each mortal his threshing-floor, upon which the chaff of each separate self is whipped and fanned and screened from the pure grain that belongs to all.

In each night-halt of the caravan on the way to Lilchien they reread the letters, and Lyn's father would look into the face of his companion through the snowy dusk or the candle-light of the shelters.

Then Lilchien, and the word that he lived—but could not be seen for days, possibly for many days. Blowy, snowy days in Lilchien, by the Great Wall, days of waiting in which the elder white man and young woman could only watch from afar off the circle of huts.

They walked the threshing-floor where the hundreds of the famine-stricken had sat in crowds through the summer and fall; they looked into the hovels where he had entered with his basket; they studied the worn tapes of the tennis-court. Often they walked to the pitted ground by the wall—the part not isolated by the government officials—and beyond to the break in the classic masonry where a rough tomb of stones had been reset by the hands of Miquan Sol. Thus, little by little, as their minds and hearts could grasp and endure the details, they read the harrowing document which Miquan and the two Americans had lived through day by day for four months.

Finally the day when the two, standing afar off, were permitted to see the blur of Lyn's face at the window, and answer the tired lift of his hand.

IT WAS true that once Lyn Tevis had a winning unconsciousness of his appearance, but not now. A Chinese doctor had brought a hand-mirror at his command.

"Not on your—— No, no; nothing like that!" he said in slow awed tones. "Bad enough to let a cholera specialist come into this room!"

For another week the best he would do was to approach the window and wave once or twice a day. That which he saw out in the distances of gray light—the strangely changed face, the harrowingly familiar face, a little lower than his father's white uncovered head—was the old thrilling mystery of life, freshly electrified with light and power. Still he kept her from him, though the waiting was like holding unopened letters in one's hand—letters that meant life and death. Once, alone, his lips moved with terrible earnestness.

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"She's—she's all the little girl I used to know—plus *Somebody!* No; I can't take the chance. It would shock her into oblivion to see me like this. But how did she get this way—with Mike gone, too?"

One day, standing at a distance, Lilian left Beacon Tevis's side suddenly, and ran forward, only halting at Lyn's window.

"Not here—please don't, Lilian!" he called, retreating into the shadows.

"But they say it is almost safe to come. The doctors say you are well——"

"Not now—please go back!"

"But to-morrow—positively! I shall come to-morrow."

He was pitted with scars, as the earth beside the wall was pitted with new graves. The scars were healed, but far from whitened out. No woman should look upon such a face as his. She might live, but would never be the same again. That night he seriously considered stealing away on camelback, leaving a message for them to follow to Puliencheng, but at every thought he was balked. There was no Miquan Sol now to help him carry out such a manifestly decent plan. The next morning he summoned nerve for the ordeal of the Chinese barber, but not to let her come. He sent her word, asking for one more day, and a second private note to his father imploring that, forcibly if necessary, Lilian be kept away. Before there was time for an answer to be brought, the door opened and Lilian herself was there. His hands lifted before his face. "Ah, don't, Lyn!" She drew closer. "Don't cover your face from me!"

"I can't let you, you know!" he cried out. "You're not strong enough, Lilian—nobody could!"

STILL closer—eyes lost in his, lips parted. And now he knew why she had haunted him, would always haunt him. The look of a little child was all he could think, but that only suggested the ineffable thing which words were never meant to tell—the look a man sees once or twice in his life at most, when the illusion of flesh fades.

"You do not know me—when you think you can send me away now!" She was but a step distant—arms lifting slowly. No sound from him. "We were shutting out the world, and they wouldn't let us do that any longer. They pried us apart to let the world come between. Oh, you were so much braver than I! But I've come back to you. Don't be frightened, now that I have come—never again be frightened!"

His face was between her hands, and all of her that had haunted him as a creature apart was in his heart again, in the very fragrance he breathed.

Now she had taken his head to her breast; one cheek pressed close to her breast, the other patted with her hand.

Neither moved more than his eyes when a figure crossed the threshold and Beacon Tevis stood in the aperture. No movement save of their eyes until he drew near. No one thought of time until the sweeping tread of camels was heard outside on the snowy threshing-floor.

Aileen's Song

By Mary Stewart Cutting

THIS day is only this day,
To-morrow shall be better!
I'll push that clinging fear away
And wait my good-luck letter.

I'll clasp my heart so fast, so fast,
It cannot break with sorrow—
For love must come at long last
To-morrow—to-morrow!

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The Ghost Whistle

Petty Emotions Had No Place in the Life of Uncle Bob Holman. He Loved and Hated With Epic Vehemence. An Uncommonly Good Story of an Old Fire-Eater of the Virginia Mountains

By Eugene Jones

UNCLE BOB HOLMAN, habitat the Blue Ridge Mountains of Virginia, feared neither God nor the devil. His profession was moonshining, his chief recreation taking pot-shots at his feudal enemies, and his age seventy-two. He also had a hobby—David, his only son.

Now David, having been educated in the district school, followed his own inclinations instead of his father's lawless footsteps, and became an engineer on the Richmond, Fredericksburg and Western Railroad, which passed close to Uncle Bob's cabin in the Blue Ridge. When, after some years of faithful service, the young man was assigned to drive the limited, Uncle Bob merely grunted; but deep down in his wicked old heart he was tickled to death.

And so it came to pass that every day the mountaineer would cross the field between his cabin and the railroad upon hearing the limited whistle at the top of the bend. David blew for the grade the customary two long and two short blasts, but he always allowed the last toot to die away in a peculiar manner, thus informing his parent that he himself was at the throttle. Invariably Uncle Bob reached the track before the locomotive had rounded the bend, where he would wait for the brief view of his son leaning from the cab window. He never waved or changed the expression of his face, yet no rain-storm or blizzard could prevent that daily trip across the fields.

One day the crack train struck a boulder which had rolled down from the mountain fifty feet ahead of the locomotive. Uncle Bob, standing near, saw the engine rear up like a frightened horse and topple sideways into the ditch; he saw Pullman after Pullman crumple into a mass of twisted scrap-iron. But the shrieks of the imprisoned passengers did not touch his heart. All that he thought of was his son. With his own hands he dragged forth David's crushed body, and with his own hands carried it to his cabin.

Next morning he buried David in a grave he had dug on the hill, even as he had buried his wife many years before. A group of neighbors peered over the fence during the interment, Uncle Bob allowing them no nearer. Nor would he tolerate the presence of a minister. After he had thrown in the last shovelful of earth, he returned to his cabin and picked up his rifle, upon the stock of which he cut a new notch. The old notches had been varnished over, signifying the cancellation of certain debts. But this last notch was very white, very fresh like a new wound.

A week later the railroad sent an emissary to interview Holman. The visit, however, did not concern the wreck. After a few tactful remarks on the part of the emissary, who was young and hopeful, Uncle Bob gleaned that the R. F. & W. wanted his property—the very spot, in fact, upon which his cabin stood. Witnesses still awesomely discuss the speed developed by a certain party on leaving those premises,

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but Uncle Bob really deserved the credit for that. Although had he happened to pick up his rifle instead of his shotgun, the railroad would undoubtedly have lost another employee.

NOW, one man in the mountains who did not fear Uncle Bob Holman was the red-headed missionary, Timothy Brockwell. Yet in spite of his temper, which was as fiery as his hair, he had never openly resented Uncle Bob's belligerent attitude toward the Church. Always in the back of his mind had lain the hope that the taciturn old moonshiner would some day, and of his own volition, see the light. He was certain nobody could teach him, because in the past the people who had attempted to teach a Holman anything had found themselves violently removed to the next world.

Although the road had been rough, Brockwell had won a following in his illiterate parish. During his years of struggle he had fought and laughed and prayed his way into the hearts of the people. His Irish wit and sympathy had helped him over many dangerous spots. Once he had stood off a gang of revenue men with a rifle while illicit whisky was being hastily poured on to the unappreciative earth, and the next day extracted a promise from the grateful still-owner to manufacture only enough of the "white lightning" for "family use." When a mountaineer was ill he turned to Timothy Brockwell for aid; when a farmer lost his crop he found the missionary ready to share his last dollar with him. Brockwell did not look down from his superior position on the souls to whom God had given so little, but straight across, and wherever he looked he smiled.

Of course, he occasionally met failure—witness the case of Uncle Bob Holman. For that old and professional sinner fought the Church and every one who stood for law and decency with his colors nailed to the mast. But when his son David met his death, the missionary felt his time had come. Now, if ever, the redoubtable Holman would turn toward religion for comfort. And so the same day that the railroad sent its agent to interview the mountaineer, Brockwell contrived to intercept Uncle Bob as he was returning from the general store. Halting in front of the towering figure, he said:

"Holman, we want you to know our hearts are bleedin' for ye. David was a fine boy."

"What business mought that be o' yourn?" growled Uncle Bob.

"None," admitted Brockwell, smiling. "Sure it isn't business at all. It's sympathy and friendliness we're offerin'."

The mountaineer scowled.

"I hain't wantin' none of yer slobberin'. Take hit back thar to them that's a-payin' yeh for hit!"

"Are ye tryin' to insult Timothy Brockwell?" asked the missionary.

"No," replied Uncle Bob. "Hit cain't be done. Thar hain't enough man in yeh for that."

Suddenly Brockwell doubled one fist and shook it under Holman's nose—quite a way under, due to his lack of height.

"Don't ye go to sassin' me, you spalpeen! If you weren't so old that you make Methuselah look like a little bye in short pants, I'd teach ye with me bare hands to respect God. I stopped to ask you to come to meetin'—so the Lord would forgive the shriveled soul in ye. Now I dare you to come!"

The mountaineer's answer was indicative of his character.

"I hain't never took a dar!" he snarled, and strode down the road.

Although nobody but Brockwell knew that Uncle Bob Holman's entrance into the meeting-house the following Sunday was in answer to a challenge, his appearance there might have been likened to the advent of a bombshell. Had the devil suddenly materialized in the center aisle, the ensuing consternation could have been no more profound.

Previous to his arrival, the meeting had been progressing with all the funereal solemnity which characterizes the mountaineers at worship. The little frame structure with bare floors, unpainted walls and hard benches was crowded. Through the cobwebbed windows came the strong light of mid-morning, revealing the congregation in all its pathetically incongruous Sunday attire—old, wizened faces under gay bonnets conceived in the Eighties; bright young faces framed in gray shawls. Some of the women wore pinched waists, and others obviously lacked a waistline. Some of the men had crowded their broad shoulders into narrow and moth-eaten dress coats, while

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the less pretentious paraded their belief that God preferred simple raiment.

Every pair of lips was close-pressed, every pair of brows drawn together, because to the poor whites of the Virginia mountains religion was a serious business.

The Reverend Timothy Brockwell was just beginning his sermon when the interruption occurred. The main door opened, revealing Uncle Bob Holman. It seemed that his towering figure must hit the top of the jamb. He ignored the faces turned wonderingly toward him. His grizzled hair stood on end; his heavy brows met in a bushy ridge. Ferocity, contempt flashed from his gray eyes. His nose was beaked, his chin thrust upward because of an almost total absence of teeth. As he paused in the doorway, one clawlike hand still gripping the knob, his face suggested the vindictive countenance of an eagle.

Every man and woman in the meeting-house knew that figure in the doorway. They knew he was the last of the "Fighting Holmans"; they knew he had killed his feudal enemies and successfully defied the law. They knew that, no matter how drunk he might be, he was a dead shot with a rifle. All of them feared him; none of them loved him. The majority of the men had followed him into battle against the revenue officers for two reasons. First, because he was a natural strategist, a born leader and a relentless foe. And, second, because they recognized the truth of the mountain slogan: "If ye hain't *with* Uncle Bob ye're agin him; and if ye're agin him ye'd better be dade!"

Mindful only of the short, red-haired person behind the wooden rostrum, the mountaineer strode up the aisle. As he passed bench after bench, every eye followed. Upon reaching the clear space before the platform he stopped. His voice held the booming quality of a big gun.

"Yeh dar'd me ter meetin', and I hain't never took a dar. Now, what the hell do yer want?"

The silence which followed chilled the congregation. It was like the calm before a terrific battle. Suddenly Uncle Bob aimed a gnarled forefinger at the missionary.

"Ye're a fool," he bellowed, "if yeh reckon yeh kin git me ter swaller this yere pap ye're a-handin' aout. Why in hell dontcher bring back that son o' mine? Why dontcher git him back whar I mought talk to him? Because yeh cain't! Because thar hain't no Gawd nor no heaven. Yeh stand thar and tells us critters ter be thankful—fer *what?* Hain't the railroad took my boy? Hain't they tryin' ter take my home? Hain't the revenoos a-chasin' and a-harryin' me? And what aire *you* doin' about hit?" He struck his fist into the palm of his left hand. "You and yer follow'in' o' milk-drinkin', soft-brained swine kin go to hell! Show me that son o' mine hain't jest whar I laid him. Show me *that*, will yeh!"

Brockwell came slowly from behind the rostrum. His eyes were dangerous.

"If it's me answer ye want, ye shall have it," said he. "Brother Holman, the Lord took yer son just as the divil will take you some day. I can't give him back to ye; but mark me words, man! He may *come* back if you don't mend your ways. He's watch-in' you now and hopin' he didn't die in vain; and when he finds he did, you'll hear from him! Yes; I know about the railroad wantin' your land, and 'tis a wicked man ye are to refuse. For all you know, David's spirit may be ridin' on the limited—when he isn't hauntin' ye.

"The names you called the people here haven't hurt them. We hold no grudge for that, because we daren't judge lest we be judged. But when you say there isn't a God and that David's soul still lies in the grave ye dug, it's up to the Lord to call ye to account. Go home to your cabin, Brother Holman, and wait for the ghost of your son—and no need to bar the door or put up the shutters, because he'll come through 'em. When convinced you are, when God has had *His* way, come back here and you'll find us ready to receive ye."

Uncle Bob turned, his eyes blazing, but he made no reply. Perhaps something in the missionary's words had stirred into life a secret fear in his heart, for Brockwell had cunningly played upon the mountaineer's one weakness. Like most of his race, Holman feared the supernatural. Looking neither to right nor to left, he strode down the aisle and out of the meeting-house.

NOW, in spite of the cavalier fashion in which he had rid himself of the railroad envoy, Holman went to town on his mule Monday morning to see Forbes Lathrop, attorney for the R. F. & W. Not that

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he had changed his mind. Oh, no! A Holman had never been known to do that. But he realized the advisability of learning whether or not the road considered his action a declaration of war. For the code of the towns differed from that of the mountains, where a fight might occur without a previous disagreement but a disagreement never occurred without a fight.

Hitching his mount in front of the local offices of the R. F. & W., Holman stalked into the presence of one Miss Gladys Van Horn, who chewed gum and stood guard over the sanctums beyond. Miss Van Horn surveyed him with raised brows, then, scratching her head with her pencil, returned her languid attention to the telephone switchboard.

All of which failed to impress the mountaineer.

"I'm a-searchin' fer a man named Lathrop," he said. "Whar's he at?"

Miss Van Horn yawned and plugged in for a number. After a moment she gurgled:

"That you, Gertie? Say——"

BUT Uncle Bob was not to be so summarily disposed of. Approaching the switchboard, he deliberately prodded her with a horny and not overclean finger.

"I aim ter see Lathrop. Hain't yer better tell me whar he's at?"

Miss Van Horn contracted violently, as if she had found herself in close proximity to something loathsome. Then, turning scornful eyes upon the caller;

"Keep your hands to yourself, you big rube! Can't you see I'm busy? As I was saying, Gertie——"

Now, the leader of the Holman faction recognized no barriers other than those defended by rifles. He had sought Miss Van Horn's assistance merely because it was the easiest way, and not because of the propriety of the proceeding. With a snort of disgust he flung open the glass-paneled door leading into the offices and stepped through.

It so happened the first office he came upon was tenanted. Behind a flat-topped desk sat an elderly man with gray hair and a pleasant face.

"I'm a-huntin' Lathrop," explained Uncle Bob from the threshold.

"My name is Lathrop," admitted the person, rising. "And you are Bob Holman, father of the engineer who was killed on the big bend."

Uncle Bob entered and sat down.

"I don't aim to talk none about that. What I aims ter talk about is this yere land business. T'other day I run off a feller yeh sent to buy my farm. Next feller yer send won't git run off; I'll plant 'im jest whar he draps!"

Forbes Lathrop, local counsel of the road, knew something of the mountaineer's character. Lighting a cigar, he lay back in his desk chair.

"So," he said, "you will shoot any man we send to your land? Very well, Holman, we have a way of handling that. But what interests me is *why*, if you won't sell, you took the trouble to ride down here."

Uncle Bob, sitting awkwardly on the stiff office chair, crossed his legs and dug his hands into his trousers pockets.

"I wanted ter warn yeh. I don't aim ter do no killin' if I don't have to. The place my pap was born in is good enough fer me!"

"Do you know why your son lost his life on the bend?" asked Lathrop abruptly.

"I aims not to talk about that."

"He lost it," continued the lawyer, "because the bend is too close under the mountain. We intend to widen the curve. When our new bend is laid, it will be far enough away from the slope to prevent the possibility of landslides. Which means we must use the ground your cabin stands on. It is not a matter of profit to us—the job will cost hundreds of thousands of dollars. It's a matter of making safe our right of way, so that what happened to your son cannot occur again."

"I don't kere nothin' fer yer plans. I won't sell!" growled Uncle Bob.

The lawyer drew on his cigar.

"You will have to, Holman."

Suddenly the mountaineer was towering over the desk. His big fist came down with a crash, rattling the ink-well and calendar.

"Yer damn railroad killed my son. Yeh hain't goin' ter git nothin' more o' mine. The fust man yer sends up thar won't never know what hits him. I got a repeatin' rifle, and I kin set in my cabin and pick off a whole army! Hit's my land, and I don't aim ter sell. Hain't yeh never heered a Holman pays his debts? Wall, I got a debt agin the road—hit's marked on my gun—

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and I'll pay part of hit by holdin' on to my property."

The lawyer deliberately knocked the ash off his cigar. His expression was more compassionate than angry.

"No, Holman; you see the law is on our side. Your refusal of our fair offer simply means that we must appeal to the state. The land will be condemned and a referee appointed to place a valuation on it. You can't hope to whip the state of Virginia single-handed, you know. And if you give in now it may save lives. Why, man, if your own son was living, he would be the first one to urge you to sell."

"David's underground!" roared Uncle Bob. "Don't yeh go ter speakin' fer him; he won't never speak no more."

Lathrop pressed a button on his desk.

"I'm sorry," he said. "We will give you one week to decide. If we don't hear from you, we must appeal to the authorities. Good-day, sir."

Uncle Bob turned to find Miss Van Horn at the door. As he slouched past she drew away her skirts, and when he had left the building she murmured, as she moved her pencil soothingly over her scalp,

"The big rube!"

SNOW! Nothing but snow everywhere. For three days the white flakes had been drifting out of a leaden sky, hiding the dump-heaps round Uncle Bob's cabin, burying deeper the body of the son he had loved. For three days the mountaineers of the section had waded stoically back and forth between the general store and their homes.

Then came the blizzard. The wind swept out of the north with a howl; the clouds huddled earthward, as if to escape its fury, and the snowflakes grew smaller. No longer did they flutter down like butterflies, but, close-packed and driven by a sixty-mile gale, they flew horizontally.

Uncle Bob, in his cabin, kept himself warm—externally with a light-wood blaze, internally with moonshine. But his bloodshot eyes and unsteady hand told of sleepless nights. When darkness crowded the single window, he sat very close to the fire, his loaded rifle within reach and his door barred. For he was secretly afraid of the noise of the wind. Also, he cursed ardently the man who had suggested his son's possible return.

On the afternoon of the third day Uncle Bob heard a knock at the door. In spite of the ghost-dispelling daylight, he answered cautiously:

"What do yeh want? Speak up!"

Came a quavering voice:

"It's me, massa—Old Jim. Ah's mighty nigh froze solid."

The mountaineer opened the door far enough to allow the bent figure of a negro to stumble in. His wool was gray; his age-dimmed eyes were sunk in his wrinkled face. Shuffling to the fire, he held his hands to the blaze.

"Tha' sto'm, boss—it's nat'lly somefin turruble! Jim Boggs come pow'ful close to gibbin' up de ghost—yassir, pow'ful close!"

Boggs had once saved Holman from the revenue officers, and Holman, with the gratitude of his race, had never forgotten. Pouring a stiff drink of 'shine, he gave it to the negro, who swallowed it at a gulp. After a moment Jim squatted down, hands still extended. His eyes swept the cabin until they rested on the rifle.

"Wha's you skeered of, massa?"

"Revenoos," muttered Uncle Bob. "Yeh cain't tell when they mought happen 'long."

"Ain't skeered of nuffin' else, massa?"

The mountaineer removed his corn-cob.

"Hit takes a Holman to scar a Holman, and thar hain't no more Holmans!"

After a moment the negro said, rolling his eyes:

"Pow'ful bad doin's on dis yere mountain to-night, massa—pow'ful bad! De railroad track's done hid under a heap of rock—yassir; must 'a' slid wif de snow."

Uncle Bob started.

"Are yer lyin', Jim?"

"No, massa, as de good Lawd's ma jedge!"

"Yer say the track's got enough rock on hit ter wreck a train?"

"Rock 'nough to wreck fo'ty trains—yassir."

Uncle Bob strode to the other end of the cabin, halting before the window. The gray light of late afternoon revealed the right of way of the R. F. & W.—a long embankment following the mountain-base. A short distance southward a dark heap, not yet covered with snow, marked the spot where tons of rock and earth had slid down from the slope, completely burying the rails. At present it offered no particular menace

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because of its visibility, but by nightfall the blizzard would effectually disguise it. The next train came through at eleven o'clock, and small chance was there for her engineer to recognize the death trap in time.

Uncle Bob remained peering forth until the storm spread a whirling curtain between him and the right of way. Then he returned to the fire.

"Jim," he said, "thar's a few of them fotched-on railroaders goin' ter hell tonight."

The negro shivered convulsively.

"Ain't yo studyin' to stop de limited, massa? Dat's why ah done chanced de sto'm. You's de on'y man nigh 'nough to warn dat train."

Into Uncle Bob's eyes came a gleam so vindictive that even Boggs could not fail to note it.

"They killed my David," said he. "Tonight I'm a-goin' ter watch 'em pay!"

"Lordy!" whispered the frightened darky. "Hallelujah! Ah sho wouldn't be in yo boots, boss. All dem ghosts a-floatin' an' a-wailin' round dis yere shack! No sir!"

"Shut up!" snarled Holman. "Thar hain't no sech thing as ghosts."

Old Jim began to rock backward and forward, his hands clasped about his knees, and only the whites of his eyes showing.

"Yas dar is, boss; yas dar is. Ah done seed 'em. Ah's physic; Ah is! Dere's ghosts an' ha'nts an' debils right now roostin' on dat rock-pile, and a-waitin' fo' dem mortals to jine 'em. Don' you tell me; Ah knows what Ah knows!"

Uncle Bob took another pull at the corn whisky. Then, getting some bread and meat from the shelf, he shared it with the negro. Outside, darkness came swiftly; inside, the blazing pine-knots illuminated the cabin and sent strange shadows chasing over the walls. The wind tore at the roof, whistled round the eaves and rushed on. The noise of the storm dissolved into individual and terrifying sounds—groans, sighs, shrieks.

FOR several hours Boggs crouched by the fire, muttering to himself now and then; while Uncle Bob, pipe in mouth, sat in his dilapidated chair and watched the blaze consume the logs. He would have liked to heap on fuel until the last shadow had been driven from the cabin, but his stock of firewood was too scanty to brook such extravagance.

It must have been nearly nine o'clock when the negro suddenly straightened, his eyes bulging.

"Oh, Lordy!" he screamed. "Ah seed it! It's ober dere—in de co'ner!"

With surprising speed Uncle Bob reached for his rifle.

"Shet up, yer fool!" he ordered. "Thar hain't nothin' thar!" But the muzzle of his weapon swung in a half-circle about the room.

"Yassir, boss, Ah done seed it! Oh, hallelujah! Dem ghosts is a-comin'—dey's a-comin'!" Backward and forward he rocked in mental anguish. "Ah kin feel 'em, an Ah kin hyeah 'em, an' ma lef' foot itches jest like it done when Ah had de las' visitation!"

Uncle Bob grabbed Boggs by the shoulder.

"I aims ter lam' yer hade open with this yere shootin'-iron if yeh don't keep hit shet," he growled.

Old Jim subsided with reluctance, continuing at intervals to groan dismally. But he had succeeded in directing the mountaineer's thoughts into disastrous channels.

Holman saw in his mind the place where he had buried David. Was the grave as he had left it? Could there be any truth in what Brockwell had said? The screech of the wind more and more resembled voices crying out in agony. The log structure shook and shuddered, while an old coat hanging in the corner suddenly began to swing on its peg. Possibly a draft from under the door—yes; possibly— All the eery stories Uncle Bob had ever heard came creeping through his harassed brain. But very clear was the image of his son David. Whenever he stared at a particular spot, the figure took up a position to right or left of it. It never quite encountered his direct gaze, or entirely disappeared from his field of vision.

Now the negro was rocking backward and forward again, his eyes rolled up exposing their whites.

"Ah's listenin', Massa Dave. Ah hyeah you hollerin'. But yo' pa he don' hyeah you. Glory be! Fo' de Lawd's sake, spirit, don' you come no nigher."

Uncle Bob leaned forward.

"Who says I don't hyeah David?"

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Jim increased his pendulatory movements, being quick to take advantage of sympathy. Also he elaborated.

"You, Massa Dave, keep offin dat train a-comin'. Ah's warnin' you, 'cause yo pap's gwyne to let it smash kerplunk into dem rocks. Hallelujah! Hallelujah! Amen!"

The mountaineer drew his hand across his eyes.

"Shet up!" he muttered. "Fust thing hit'll be me that's a-seein' ghosts." He was trembling, and as he got out of his chair his legs shook. Pacing the length of the cabin, he returned to stand over the crouching negro. "I tells yeh David's in his grave. That preacher lied ter me. Thar hain't nothin' goin' ter mess round hyeah. Nobody kin come back—not from the grave——"

The wind shook the log structure as a dog shakes a rat, and brought with it other more terrifying sounds.

"Fo' goodness' sakes, massa, ain't you fixin' to stop dat train?" Jim's tone held entreaty.

"I aims," answered Uncle Bob, "ter pay up them railroad fellers."

BOGGS went back to his swaying, with a groan.

"Yer better quit," advised the mountaineer. "Hit won't help none—you goin' on so. And I cain't hyeah——"

Suddenly, grabbing up his rifle, he flung open the door.

"Come in!" he bellowed. "Hit's yer *pap*, David!" But only the storm entered. The snow swirled about his head and shoulders; great puffs of smoke belched from the fireplace, and the negro held up his hands as if begging for mercy.

"Don't yer hyeah me?" pleaded Holman. "Hain't yer a-comin'?"

The blizzard's answer was a shriek of wind which nearly tore the door from his fingers. But the shapes dancing in the snow, the creatures just beyond the light from the fire only shrank further away.

Stumbling back to his chair, he shook his fists at the shadows on the walls.

"Git inter the open! Thar's a Holman hyeah!"

"Hallelujah!" screamed Boggs in an ecstasy of fear.

The mountaineer let his arms fall. His beaked face was gray, and into his voice crept the monotonous intonation of a hypnotized man.

"Jim's right, David. Don't yeh go ter ridin' on the limited. Thar's a rock-pile in front of her, and hit hain't a fit place ter come up on. Go back ter the hill, David, whar yer pap put yeh——"

His words died away, leaving him staring fixedly into the fire. A half-hour passed—a half-hour of cold and of horror, for the cabin had been chilled by the opening of the door. Then out of the night came a sound which again brought Uncle Bob to his feet. Long-drawn, wailing, it contrived to pierce the noise of the gale. Jim heard it also, and his face worked convulsively.

"The limited!" muttered Holman.

ONCE more the locomotive whistle screamed, but this time the blast died away in a peculiar manner. It was as if some one had struck Uncle Bob a terrific blow. He reeled across the cabin drunkenly.

"Hit hain't him! Damn the wind! You, Jim, did yer hyeah David a-blowin' that whistle? Did yeh, I say?" Reaching the opposite wall, he groped along it like a blind man, only to halt the next moment and swing about, his eagle face working. "Hain't yeh got a tongue? Cain't yeh answer?"

"Yassir, boss; Ah done heered it!" screamed Boggs.

" 'Twas David."

"Hallelujah! Hallelujah! Amen!"

Gone was the self-contained leader of the Holman faction, and in his place cowered an old man. Uncle Bob was shaking all over. He put his hands before his face as if to shut out some terrible picture.

"Ye're up on th' hill, David! I'm a-hearin' things. Hit's the wind. Ye cain't be a-signalin' yeh pap." He was pleading now, his voice a whine. "Keep offen that train, son! Don't yeh go to meddlin'. Git back to yeh grave whar I left yeh. Hit won't come ag'in. Hit was a trick of the storm——"

But it did! Like the call of a banshee, the sound penetrated the mud-chinked logs, ending with the wail Uncle Bob knew so well. Only one man had ever blown for the bend like that, and that man was dead. No; he couldn't be dead—or if he *were* dead, his spirit had jerked the whistle-cord—David's spirit on the limited——

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BROCKWELL'S warning flashed before Uncle Bob: "Wait for the ghost of your son." He saw the train five miles above the bend, rushing downward to where the landslide lay waiting, hidden under its white coat. He saw the long line of Pullmans, the sleeping passengers; but what appeared most vivid was the engine-cab with David at the throttle. The whistle could mean but one thing: his boy was calling him! His boy who, he'd thought, could never call again!

And now a change came over Holman. The old light crept back into his eyes. He ceased trembling. It took but a moment for him to jerk on his coat and pick up his rifle. Some irresistible force suddenly commanded his body and brain. To reach the track in the short ten minutes required by the limited to run the length of the bend—that was all that counted.

As he flung open the door Jim stopped his rocking.

"Whar's you bound, massa? De'll get you—dem ghosts!"

"I'm aimin' ter stop the train!" shouted Uncle Bob. "David's a-ridin' on hit. Hain't yeh heered th' whistle?"

Shutting the door with a crash, he stumbled through the loose snow. The wind cut his face; the flying swirl blinded him, but he was unconscious of his own discomfort. He had received the one call he dared not disregard. His conviction that there was no hereafter crumbled, for had he not been presented with irrefutable proof to the contrary?

Battling every step, he struggled on. The night was black. Holman traveled entirely by the wonderful sense of direction which is a gift of the mountaineers. Already his hands were numb, and he found breathing difficult. Somewhere ahead lay the railroad and the rock-pile; and somewhere ahead the limited was racing to destruction. Even now the horror of what might happen to the passengers and crew did not affect him. What drove him on, heedless of the cold, of the snow, was the conviction that David had spoken from another world through the medium of that whistle.

Time and again Uncle Bob fell, and time and again he was forced to beat his hands against his body so he might continue to grip his rifle. Those vague shadows which had lurked outside the cabin did not bother him now. Perhaps they were pleased with him. Perhaps they, too, had been in league with David!

Ah! What was that? His foot had hit something hard. Bending swiftly, he managed to uncover a section of rail. He had reached the right of way in time! With a yell, which was instantly stifled by the storm, Holman began to follow the track northward. Here the going was comparatively easy, from a lack of drifts. Before leaving his cabin he had conceived a simple plan for stopping the train, and all that was necessary for its execution was to put as much distance as possible between himself and the rock-pile, thus giving the engineer a chance to apply the brakes.

Suddenly a headlight flashed round the bend and bore down upon him. He cocked his rifle and waited. Nearer, nearer drew the ball of fire, reflecting itself in the snow. When the locomotive was hardly a hundred yards away, Uncle Bob raised his gun. With the sharp report came absolute blackness. There was the crash of falling glass, followed by the shriek of the whistle. He stumbled clear of the track in time to watch the cars flash past, wheels striking sparks.

FIVE minutes later found Holman the center of a little group standing beside the panting locomotive. The engineer, fireman, train and Pullman conductors were there, but those passengers who had suffered rude awakening by the abrupt application of the brakes did not venture forth into the storm to investigate the trouble.

An oil-torch on the tender platform was carrying on its own battle with the blizzard, while, far behind, the limited had set off a fusee. The brilliant fire painted the snow in its immediate vicinity, attempted to reach flaming fingers through the night and failed. From the engine the fusee looked like a pink moon perched between the rails.

"You sure can shoot," remarked the engineer for the third time, as he peered at the lanky figure of the mountaineer. "How'd you happen to see the slide on such a night?"

"I saw hit this evenin' afore dark," returned Uncle Bob.

There was a brief silence.

"Then," put in a conductor, "why the devil didn't you warn the nearest tower? What's the idea of smashing our headlight?"

"I reckon yeh wouldn't understand if I

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told yeh. My son David kept a-callin'——"

The fireman leaped forward.

"Not Dave Holman?"

"That was his name."

"Look here, my friend," said the fireman; "quit kiddin' us. Dave Holman is dead. Don't I know! I fired for Holman for years—up to a couple of weeks before his train got smashed on this bend. If I hadn't happened to be laid off with a fever, I'd have been in that wreck, too. This is the first time I've ridden the limited since he cashed in."

The train conductor spoke.

"Whoever you are, you better come across with some facts. How do we know but what you're lying to us? Maybe this is a hold-up game?"

Uncle Bob stepped close to the man in uniform.

"Don't yeh go to accusin' no Holman of that! I mought let daylight through yeh. Thar hain't another feller ever blew a whistle like David. He did it special fer me—so's I could see the train pass. To-night hit come—hit's the fust time since he died."

"I'll be eternally damned!" ejaculated the fireman. "So *that* was it! You're Dave's father, eh? And when you heard me blow for the bend——"

"You——"

"Sure! The fireman generally pulls the whistle—not the engineer. Your son used to get me to blow what he called his 'private signal.' What made me do it to-night I don't know. Habit, I guess."

There was a huskiness in Uncle Bob's voice.

" 'Tweren't habit, young feller. Don't yeh go to belittlin' the dead! Hit was David a-savin' his train. Yeh didn't see him, but my son was a-ridin' on that 'ere enjine jest now. No; yeh needn't look"—as incredulous eyes were turned toward the cab—"he hain't thar no more."

Abruptly the mountaineer shouldered his way clear of the group and plunged into the blizzard.

THE following day the Reverend Timothy Brockwell, returning from the general store, discovered a visitor waiting for him in his little cabin. Uncle Bob Holman had entered unbidden, according to mountain custom. The missionary at once recognized the angular figure standing by the stove, but there was something unfamiliar in Holman's carriage. His shoulders seemed stooped; he looked older, less vindictive.

"Howdy?" greeted Brockwell, stamping the snow from his boots.

"Howdy?" returned Uncle Bob.

"It's surprised and pleased I am to see ye," went on the missionary cheerfully. "Me conscience has been pesterin' me over what I said to you in meetin'. After all, a man has a right to his own opinion."

The mountaineer ignored the apology, his face stony.

"When a Holman finds he's wrong, he comes aout with hit. I was wrong about David. He hain't up thar on the hill no more; he's a-takin' kere of the limited. I'm a-goin' ter help him by sellin' my land to the railroad."

Brockwell showed his amazement, but he managed a smile.

"That's fine, Brother Holman! 'Tis a man ye are to say it. Of course, you know you are welcome at meetin'——"

Uncle Bob drew himself up.

"Don't yeh go ter misunderstandin' me. I hain't got no use fer you or yer fotched-on idees. You was right about David—which makes me hate the worse. I'm on one side, Brockwell, and you're on t'other. A Holman don't never change sides. But yeh hain't nothin' agin David; have yeh?"

The missionary controlled his rising anger.

"No," he replied.

"Then," said Uncle Bob, his voice quivering, "yeh mought pray fer his soul. 'Twouldn't do no hurt."

As he went out of the door he stumbled a little, and his step was none too steady in the snow.

A New Author—A Short-Story Gem

THE November EVERYBODY'S will contain a short story to which it desires to call special attention—"Little Sacrifices," by Louise Saunders. It is an excellent piece of work and it has to us the added interest of being the author's first story.

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The Thing That Mattered

To Do That, Always, as They Saw It—That was What the Sea Taught Two Vastly Different Men.

By Albert Richard Wetjen

THEY represented the extremes of society in the little seaport of Doonrich. One lived in the great house on the hill, the other in the tumbledown cottage at its foot. Once, when Macklocklin's father was hauled before the local court for poaching, it was Andy's father who sat on the bench and passed judgment. Andy was a model boy and had a reputation at the school for being clever. Macklocklin was not a model boy and he had no reputation at all. The one moved in the circle of Doonrich's better class, the other ran with the rats of the waterfront.

When Andy was sixteen his fond parent apprenticed him to the ancient and honorable profession of seafaring. At the same time, being a sort of father to all the port, the judge took steps to relieve Macklocklin's hard-working mother of the burden of her son. He found him a berth as deck boy on the four-masted barque *Fenris*, which was also Andy's ship. And on the day that the *Fenris* sailed the judge called both boys into his library and talked with them.

"Ye're both startin' on th' same career," he said among other things, "and it depends on yourselves whether ye are successes or no'. You, Andy, are no' so well fitted for a rough life as perhaps ye sh'd be. You, Macklocklin, are mayhap too well fitted. Th' sea I'm hoping will straighten ye both out. There's only one piece o' advice I'll give: Play th' game. Ye canna go wrong much if ye do that, though your ideas o' th' game may vary. That's all. The carriage is waitin' t' take ye to th' dock. Good-by."

To start them equal the judge then gave each boy ten dollars. Andy, being somewhat religious, asked the parental blessing and got it, while Macklocklin, who wasn't religious at all, stood by and grinned. The judge shook hands and saw the boys to the carriage. They joined the *Fenris* that evening and while Andy went soberly to the apprentice quarters, near the officers', Macklocklin drifted to the wharf-front saloons with the able seamen and drank with them all night.

Seven months later, in Adelaide, Macklocklin came to Andy and called him down from the poop.

"Whist, ye preaching ninny, will ye do me a favor for th' sake of the Doonrich days?" he said.

"What is it?" asked Andy, frowning and wrenching his sleeve from the other's familiar grip. "It depends."

"A message t' ma old mother when ye get home."

"An' fer why?"

"I'm jumpin' ship t' see th' world. I've got a job on a four-masted windbag boun' for Noumea. An' if ye breathe a word t' the skipper I'll spread ye over the foredeck."

Andy shrugged. " 'Tis none o' my business. Go your way. Ye've been a curse t' discipline ever sin' ye came aboard."

Macklocklin chuckled, "Go 'way with ye, ye little officer boy. But the message?"

"I'll give it. What is it?"

"Jest tell her what I've done. Tell her I'll come home when m' fortune's made.

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An' tell yere father I'll sen' him ten dollars some day."

"Sa I imagine," sneered Andy, and stalked away, while Macklocklin went for'ard, grinning, and packed his seabag ready to be smuggled overside, via the hawsers. The *Fenris* sailed without him and for a time he was seen no more.

The boys heard of each other frequently from wandering seamen, but their paths actually crossed only three times in twenty years. Andy grew to be even more a model as a man than he had been as a boy. He was said never to drink or smoke or swear. At twenty-three he was first mate, at twenty-five a master. At thirty-eight he commanded the *Euripides*, which was the crack ship of the great North Star Line. He was respected and trusted by every underwriter from Sydney to Liverpool, while as a seaman none ranked higher.

Macklocklin had a reputation of a different sort. The Islands claimed him for eight years. He tried everything from honest trader to copra pirate. After that, when he was second mate of a Siamese junk, under a Chinese captain in the Coral Sea, he wrote home to his mother and sent her three thousand dollars mysteriously earned. To the judge he sent ten dollars plus some interest. The first time Andy saw him, after that day on the deck of the *Fenris*, Macklocklin was working as a native labor boss in Durban, in the whaling station there. The second time Andy saw him he was drunk and in jail in Port Said. And the third time he was first mate of a rusty tramp that was wanted for poaching seals in the Pribilofs.

He had no name at all among seamen, for he was a heavy drinker and ruled with a heavy hand over his crews. And there was not an underwriter west of Suez who would trust him with a coal barge. He had gone through life singing and laughing, taking nothing seriously, not even himself. He paid for his fun as he went and had long forgotten the career the judge had talked of.

Then came the Great War and for the fourth and last time Andy and Macklocklin met.

IT WAS in the North Atlantic and it was in winter. Half a gale was blowing, which was calm weather for that time of year. The cold was bitter and the decks and rigging of ships crossing the sea were fantastically sheathed in ice.

Macklocklin, who now commanded a camouflaged little tramp by the name of *Hamward*, sighted a burning ship on his starboard bow early one boisterous afternoon. He bellowed to the helmsman, shouted down the speaking tube to the mate in his cabin and then swore at the weather in three languages.

He went below after a while, when the mate came on the bridge and the *Hamward* was on her new course, heading for the burning ship. In his room he took a stiff drink of whisky. After that he put on another shirt and an extra pair of socks. Then he went up to the bridge again.

Macklocklin was now a rather big man, stout-chested, red-faced, clean-shaven, hearty. His eyes were gray and held the humorous cynical twinkle of the wicked and wise. Even in anger and danger that twinkle was present. He had a voice like a tugboat's siren and a hand as quick to double up and shoot out to a man's jaw as it was to meet another, palm to palm, and shake.

For a crew on the *Hamward* he had a gang of drunken, unshaven ruffians and he ruled them harshly. For all that the officers and men rather liked him. He was always fair.

On the bridge he focused a pair of glasses and watched the burning ship. She was a big craft, three-masted, two-funneled. Her color was a battleship gray. She listed heavily forward and from her waist and stern black greasy smoke, lit by an occasional lick of flame, poured up and was shredded over the sea by the wind.

"High bridge, clipper bows, cruiser stern," said Macklocklin's mate, joining the captain. "One of the North Star Line—Wireless said he can't get into communication."

"That so?" Macklocklin grunted and lowered the glasses. He rubbed his fat chin and chuckled. "Wonder if 'tis th' *Euripides?* I used t' know th' skipper of her."

"That's Andy McCare, isn't it? They say he's the crack skipper of his line!"

"Aye, that's him. He's a good name, bless his heart—— *Bring her two points starboard, quartermaster!*" The man at the wheel twirled the spokes. "Get one of the lifeboats ready t' sen' away. They're

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safer'n th' accident boats. We'll steam t' win'ward of her an' see who she is an' if any's aboard. Looks from here that her crew's abandoned her. I see th' davits swingin' empty."

"Yes, sir," said the mate and moved away. He called out for the bos'n and, oilskin-wrapped, he came up on the lower bridge. The irate watch below tumbled from the fo'c's'le, angry at being pulled from warm bunks to stand by on the icy deck.

The *Hamward* steamed in a slow half circle to the windward side of the burning ship, so that the smoke blew away from her. Through the glasses Macklocklin read the metal-lettered name on the bows. "S. S. *Euripides*." He grunted and then grinned.

"'Tis Andy's packet all right. Th' little preachin' ninny's lost a ship. 'Tis drifting he is—to my class."

The foredeck of the *Euripides*, the small portion immediately forward of the bridge that was dipping in the sea, appeared at first deserted. There was no question that any one could be aft, for from the bridge to the poop, smoke and flames roared up. Macklocklin swept the foredeck through his glasses. He noted the falls of the bridge boats overhauled and slapping in the sea. He saw an abandoned life raft, half-wrecked, hanging by a piece of lanyard from a davit cleat, where it had evidently caught while being thrown overboard. Then he saw a flutter of something dark from the top of number two hatch and at the same time the mate shouted from the bridge below.

"Some one for'ard there, sir. See him?"

"Aye, aye," Macklocklin called. "Get a boat away. I'll take her over." He crossed to the telegraph and rang "Stop." The second mate came from the chart house just then. He had been jotting down in the bridge log the time of the first sighting of the *Euripides*.

The captain said: "Mr. Harrison, take th' bridge. Keep her most as she is fra' th' wreck. Use the engines if ye have to."

"Aye, aye, sir," acknowledged the second, and he thrust his hands into thick leather mitts and started pacing thwartships behind the for'ard canvas dodger, his head twisted most of the time so that he could see the burning craft.

Macklocklin sighed as he dropped the glasses into the box. It was just his luck. If the *Euripides* had only been abandoned and was not afire he might have towed her to port and got hold of some salvage money. As it was he'd probably get a dusting down from his owners for being late. It wouldn't be so bad even if the fire could be fought and checked, but the volume of flame and smoke gave no hope of that.

The falls of the lee lifeboat screeched as the block sheaves spun around. The swell rose up and kissed the boat's keel and then she was afloat with six profane seamen struggling to hold her off the *Hamward's* steel side. Macklocklin grunted as he dropped down the pilot ladder and stepped aboard. He clambered over the stretchers and settled himself in the stern sheets. He shipped the tiller and glared around.

"Let go!" he roared. A seaman above cast off the painter. A seaman in the boat coiled it inboard. The other seamen slid out the oars and dug them deep.

In a few seconds they had the swing of it and worked in unison. The boat drew away from the *Hamward* and started over the breaking swell. She tossed badly when she came from out the lee of the mother ship. Macklocklin cursed as cold spray flopped on his oilskins. The tiller kicked mightily under his iron hand.

"Step that blasted mast," he said. "Get up that sail—an' make it damned snappy!"

TWO men slid their oars in and jumped for the stumpy spar that lay fore and aft on the stretchers. They stepped it with some difficulty and hoisted the lug. It filled with a snapping report that threatened to tear it away and Macklocklin screamed, "Reef, ye blankety, blank fools!"

The seamen complied awkwardly, one of them muttering, "We ain't windjammer men, darn ye."

"Answer me, ye scum, an' I'll mash th' tar of ye through th' head. Lay on th' weather side there. I'm drivin' her—— No, ye ain't win'bag men, more's the pity. Th' dirt they sen' t'sea ain't fit t' be called sailors nowadays—— In th' bow there, get that boat hook ready!"

His sullen crew, muttering among themselves, cold and miserable with the

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wind and spray, which was a vastly different wind and spray from that felt on the high decks of the *Hamward*, Macklocklin ran down near the burning *Euripides* and dropped his sail.

"On deck there!" he bellowed. "Are ye ready fer takin' off?"

Slowly a head appeared at the rail, just above the scupper, as though its owner was lying full length on the bitter deck.

"Ahoy!" came a weak voice. "Keep awa' from here! There's two hun'red ton of explosives aboard."

Macklocklin swore. "Where's th' blasted crew?" he wanted to know.

"Aban'oned ship. Ah'm here alone. Who're ye?"

"Skipper o' the *Hamward*, bound Dakar t' New York. An' where be Andy McCare?"

"Here," was the answer and Macklocklin hoisted sail again and grinning ran nearer.

"Whist, ye gold-braid seaman, 'tis Macklocklin a-talkin'. Can ye drop overboard? Or can ye sen' us a line?"

The shoulders and arms of Andy McCare appeared. His half-frozen hands clawed the rail. He was a lean, stern man with a pointed thin beard and a narrow face. His mouth was grim and big. His cold blue eyes glared from under bushy brows at the tossing boat. A spasm of pain crossed his face and was gone.

"Be away, ye godless man," he called, and waved feebly. "Th' craft's like to go any minute. Th' fire's in th' hold where th' explosive is stored. Go 'way."

"Are ye hurt? Can't ye stan' up?"

"Ma legs're smashed. There was an explosion a while back when I was by th' bridge. Go 'way, ye fool, an' look for m' castaway crew. Ye c'n do nothin' fer me."

"Give way," snarled Macklocklin, and the boat crept nearer the *Euripides*. He promised his scared seamen the wrath of God but they feared him the most. So they tugged at the oars, the sail being down.

McCare raised himself yet higher with a great effort and shouted angrily with all the strength of his lungs.

"Get away, ye fool. Get away. She'll blow the lot of ye to hell! Would ye risk th' lives o' good sailors?"

Instinctively the seamen stopped pulling at the oars. Macklocklin's eyes twinkled and his jaw came up with a snap. He glared at the lean, pain-racked figure on the *Euripides'* foredeck and unshipped the tiller. The boat swung broadside with alarming swiftness and wellnigh overturned. The seamen screamed and clawed the air.

"Their lives are nothin' t' me," Macklocklin roared. "Will ye row, ye scum, or must I drive ye? Burn or drown, an' take th' choice."

HE SWUNG the tiller and caught the nearest man a crack on the head that caused him to yelp with pain and seize his oar butt. The other seamen went to rowing again. The steel hull of the burning ship rasped alongside the boat. There was a deep rumble from the smoking holds. A tongue of solid red flame shot up from aft, between the poop and the bridge. The *Euripides* lurched from side to side. Then came a concussion that split the eardrums. The sky rained fragments. The sea grew spotted with little whirlpools. One or two of the seamen received slight wounds.

"Back, ye godless man!" screamed Andy McCare. "She'll go altogether next time. 'Twas a box o' somethin'. Get 'way. Would ye——"

The seamen in the boat backed water furiously. Stark fear widened their eyes. The boat shot from the *Euripides'* side. Fear made the men sweat despite the cold. Then Macklocklin was among them with his tiller head.

"Row, ye scum! And row forward." He lashed out indiscriminately. "Ye canna let th' whitest man at sea die fer wan' o' a little aid. Row!" There was a short hard tussle in the waist of the pitching boat. Then, half-swamped, it came to the *Euripides'* side again.

"Make fast," said Macklocklin grimly. The man in the bows, a bloody-faced sullen man now, tied the painter to the rail in a half dazed fashion.

"Two of ye get him," came the snarled command.

Two more dazed seamen went over the rail and lifted the injured Andy, who was still half hysterically screaming for them to go. So low was the *Euripides* in the water that it was easy to lower her captain into the boat that bobbed alongside,

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her gunwales level with the *Euripides'* forward slanting scuppers.

Macklocklin received Andy tenderly and laid him on the bottom boards at his feet. He flung one protecting arm about him and then glared at the seamen.

"Give way," he rumbled. Some one let go the painter. In hot haste to be gone from the blazing ship that was nothing more than a huge bomb, the seamen tore at their oar butts and the boat shot clear.

"No one else aboard?" asked Macklocklin. And Andy answered, "No. Ma crew deserted late this mornin'. Th' mate died in th' first explosion. Got caught in the saloon. Th' engineers an' t' other two mates I sen' away wi' the passengers at dawn."

"Why didn't ye wireless?"

The captain of the *Euripides* groaned and twisted his crushed legs to a more comfortable position. He shivered in the cold spray. His teeth chattered and his face was blue. Macklocklin yelled for the sail to be hoisted. He flung a blanket he had brought from the *Hamward* about the other's shoulders.

Andy groaned: "Wireless? Th' fire burnt the after spar an' th' lanyard an' th' aërial came down. We did get off some messages but had na answer."

"Where's th' boats?"

"I sent them steerin' north b' east for th' coast o' Ireland. They sh'd make it."

"Huh," Macklocklin grunted. "I'll have my man wireless about. Mayhap we'll get in touch wi' some one."

It took the boat nearly fifteen minutes to accomplish the hard beat against the wind, though the mother ship maneuvered to give them as much lee as possible. But at last they rammed near the waiting *Hamward* and with the oars pulled alongside.

The seaman in the bows hove the painter and a seaman aboard caught it and made it fast. A rope's end was lowered and Captain McCare was hoisted and hurried away to the captain's cabin. Macklocklin came next and rolled after his old friend. The boat was hoisted inboard.

"What next, sir?" asked the mate, meeting the cold numbed captain on the companion from the main-deck to the lower bridge.

Macklocklin thought.

"Get farther awa' from th' *Euripides*. She's a bunch of explosives aboard. Ye saw that sample awhile back? 'Tis goin' to be worse when she does go. We'll stan' by t' make sure there's no derelic' left t' float around."

Said the mate, "Aye, aye, sir," and he went up to the navigation bridge.

"Well?" asked the second, moving back from the ice-caked dodger.

"We're standing by," the mate responded, "except that we're getting a bit farther off in case of accidents.. Ring for half speed."

The captain went along to his own room and grunted with satisfaction as he felt the engines recommence their throbbing beneath his feet.

THE *Euripides* blew up with a thunderous roar some ten minutes after Andy and Macklocklin had boarded the *Hamward*. Andy, white-faced and shaking, looked on the smoke-covered scene from the porthole above the bunk whereon he lay. Macklocklin peered over his shoulder, standing on a chair and leaning across the bunk edge. When the smoke cleared Andy sank back to the pillows and groaned while Macklocklin dropped to the deck and went on bandaging up the other's smashed legs.

"'Tis a sad thin'," Andy whispered. "'Tis a sad thin' fer a master t' lose a ship. My first, Macklocklin."

Macklocklin grunted and inserting a safety pin in the bandage fastened it deftly.

"That's that," he said, stepping back and viewing his handiwork. "The doctor 'll fix ye up when we make New York—First ship lost, ye say? Shame take it. I've lost half a dozen. Ye get over it in time."

"'Tis nothing t' laugh by," insisted Andy hotly, his face reddening. "'Tis a habit t' break men for losin' ships."

"Not ye, Andy. 'Sides, you wasn't t' blame fer th' fire, I suppose."

"Nay. Spon'aneous combustion—but ma reputation's gone."

"That's nothin', mon. Ye'll work one up again, I doubt not."

"Mebbe."

And Andy grunted and glared thoughtfully at his swathed legs.

"Ye were good," he said after a while. "I never tho't a godless man like ye w'd

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do sich a thing. 'Twas a risk ye took t' board the *Euripides*."

Macklocklin looked up quickly and there was the twinkle in his gray eyes. He scratched his chin with one hand and reached for the whisky bottle with the other.

He said heartily: "Ye're a better mon than I tho't, Andy. An' ye're white. There's no' many w'd keep a boat's crew off when 'twas coming t' save them. Now na more—— Drink?"

"I never touch——" Andy began, but Macklocklin stopped him with a grunt and poured out a glass for himself.

After a while Andy said, "I've been thinking." He tugged at his sparse beard and frowned. He raised himself on one elbow to watch the other. "I've been thinkin' there's only one thin' matters, ye ken."

Macklocklin grunted again and held up his glass to the light. "Aye," he said, uncaring.

"Ye'd d' well," Andy said grimly, breaking his train of thought for a moment, "t' leave sich liquor alone. Ye'd had a crack Cunarder now mebbe instead of a pot-sided tramp if ye had."

Macklocklin looked at him and thought. Then he said, slowly: "Ye wouldna un'er-stand if I told ye, Andy. You an' I live different. Mebbe I'm wron' but I've had every last drip o' juice from th' orange. Let be, ye preachin' ninny."

He drank the whisky slowly and with relish. He set the glass down with a bang on the edge of his desk. Then he grinned.

"Ye're right of course," he admitted. "Drink's one o' ma devils."

Andy tugged at his beard again, and again he frowned. He reflected. Then a warmer look came to his frosty eyes.

"As I w's sayin', 'tis but one thin' counts. Ye'll min' th't day in Doonrich when my father talked wi' us? All ye must care of is play th' game as ye see it—ye'll min' that? 'Tis true. Accordin' to his lights 'twas said by some one. Play th' game. . . . We be differen' men, you an' I, but we be sailors an' we keep th' laws o' th' sea that are no' written. I thin' ma father must 'a' meant that. A sinful mon ye are, Macklocklin, but ye're white."

He put out his hand. Macklocklin grinned a little foolishly and then took it.

"Ye're a preachin' ninny, Andy, but there's hopes fer ye yet," he said. "An' your sainted father, he—he knew what he was talkin' about."

"Amen," said Andy solemnly. "He did."

Poets

By Theodosia Garrison

The grand, great poets are like mountains in the clouds.
They veil themselves from asking eyes—they shield themselves from crowds.
But the young, singing poets are like flowers in the grass,
That have a nod and have a smile, for all who pause and pass.

The great, grand poets, they roar like storms at sea.
They frighten and bewilder the humble folk like me.
But the young, singing poets come in as neighbors might—
They share your fare at noonday, your hearth at candle-light.

The great, grand poets they thunder out the law
As though they spoke from Sinai to terrify and awe—
But the young, singing poets come laughing up the lawn
And call you out with fiddles to greet the rose o' dawn.

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An Appealing Blend of Love and Mystery

THOROUGHBRED

Detective Bell, Convinced of Her Innocence, Goes Over to Constance. They Uncover a Sinister Plan of Gabriel and Beachey to Ruin Judge Jeffries at Latonia, Too Late to Check It

By Mrs. Wilson Woodrow

Illustrations by O. F. Schmidt

Begin this serial with any instalment. The story is here up to this issue.

A RAT with the strength of a lion would still be—a rat. But, proverbially, a cornered rat will fight. And if, when cornered, he has a lion's strength—well, in that case, it might be wise to look out for him.

Perry Gabriel was a cornered rat, plus a lion's strength; and this *plus* included his inherited wealth, his social connections and certain important business affiliations.

The opportunity which a crooked horseman had presented to him of secretly backing a scheme to win a pot of money at the Latonia race-track through the introduction of a "ringer" had strongly appealed to his furtive and avaricious temperament. And now, when, by an unexpected turn of events, he was threatened with exposure and heavy financial loss, he turned to his powerful connections in an effort to avert the disaster.

Conditions for a turf-swindle of the sort planned were never more propitious. The trainer, Jim DeVries, had under his care two horses that were full brothers by breeding, and except for a difference of three years in age and some easily disguised details of appearance, as much alike as twins.

The five-year-old, Joybells, a sensational performer in his youth, but later, from one cause and another, discredited and in eclipse, had been purchased that spring by Constance Lee—Mrs. Norman Lee, of the New York racing set—and in his work-outs had shown signs of a return to his early form.

The other, Sleighbells, a two-year-old, was owned by Judge Clay Jeffries, a prominent Kentucky lawyer, and owner of the celebrated blue-grass stock farm, Beechlands.

Both sons of a famous sire, Bonny Bells, they happened that season to be under the schooling of DeVries. The ambition of Judge Jeffries was to win the Wide-awake, the big juvenile stakes at Latonia, with his two-year-old, while Mrs. Lee hoped for a dramatic come-back for her Joybells at Saratoga in August.

The resemblance between the two horses was so marked that the idea was hatched in DeVries' brain of playing the old rôle of the nurse in the fairy-tale and exchanging his charges. He turned it over in his mind, dwelling on its fascinating possibilities and weighing its hazards.

If the strong and seasoned Joybells could be cleverly insinuated into the Wide-awake, there was no question that he could walk

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away from its field of youngsters. And if the colt, Sleighbells, were so mishandled on his one or two public appearances as greatly to heighten the betting-odds against him—why, there was no limit to the amount that might be won.

While DeVries considered the various aspects, pro and con, of such a short cut to fortune, something occurred which made his decision easy and affirmative. Mrs. Lee, for reasons of her own, sequestered herself in the Cumberland Mountains; and business and politics were absorbing so much of Judge Jeffries' attention that he had no time to give to his racing interests. DeVries was therefore left free to follow his own devices without either oversight or interference; but he could not proceed very far with his plans without a backer. And for that post Perry Gabriel seemed made to order. He was rich; he was unscrupulous, and he had a deep personal grudge against both Jeffries and Constance Lee.

It did not take DeVries and Gabriel long to reach an agreement, and the trainer then moved his horses to an obscure track near Cincinnati to prepare for his great stroke.

He had been there for a month now, busily engaged in training Joybells down to the semblance of a two-year-old, filing off his teeth, adroitly touching up his coat with dyes, counterfeiting the appearance of Sleighbells in every detail.

AND at last the race was at hand. The Wide-awake would be run at Latonia on Saturday, and this was Thursday evening. Gabriel, as financier of the enterprise, had come out to Cincinnati, and a hundred thousand dollars of his money was already in the hands of agents and commissioners to be placed in pool-rooms all over the country at the proper moment. He and DeVries were counting confidently on a haul of more than a million dollars.

Then, as Gabriel was in his hotel rooms dressing for dinner, DeVries burst in with a telegram from Mrs. Lee's maid, Delia, every word of which spelled ruin to their venture as well as to themselves. A detective named Bell had in some impossible way discovered their purpose and had informed Mrs. Lee, who was leaving post-haste for Cincinnati to prevent it.

Gabriel steadied under the shock of the catastrophe. He thought of the hundred thousand dollars he had put up, of the huge profits he would lose, of the ghastly position in which he would be placed if his part in the affair became known. In the confused welter of his thoughts one idea was uppermost, and he voiced it viciously.

"That woman must be stopped!"

"How?" DeVries gave a gesture of helplessness.

"How? You can always get what you want, if you're willing to pay for it. Wreck her train—blow up a bridge—anything to keep her from getting here!"

As he spoke, he was thinking. His words suggested an expedient. He called to his valet.

"Bring me a railroad guide!" he snapped. "And then get out. I've business to attend to."

When the book was brought, he hurriedly thumbed over the pages until he found a map of the region where Mrs. Lee had taken refuge. After studying this carefully, he whipped over to a table of train-schedules.

"We're in luck!" he exclaimed. "The only way she can get out is on a little branch road running down from the mountains, and there's no train she can take before eleven o'clock. It's only seven now." He glanced at the traveling-clock on the table. "We've four hours to work in."

Turning to the telephone, he put in a call to New York for President Allison of the Stony Creek Coal Corporation. When the connection was effected, he spoke tersely and with the accent of authority. As a heavy stockholder in the company, he knew that Allison could not afford to disregard his wishes.

"Perry Gabriel talking," he announced. "Say, Allison; I want something of you. You must have some fellow in the Stony Creek district that you keep for—well, confidential work. You understand? A sort of strong-arm proposition. . . . Sure," he broke in impatiently. "I realize that you don't know anything about such things yourself. But your secretary does, or your manager, or superintendent, or somebody you can pass a tip to. And I'm counting on you to help me out of a hole."

The answer to this was evidently more satisfactory; for when he spoke again his tone was mollified, although still peremptory.

"All right, then. But you'll have to

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move fast, Allison. There's less than four hours at your disposal, and there mustn't be any slip-ups or blundering. Now, listen; you know the Logan coal-property? Well, for the next forty-eight hours I want it absolutely cut off from the rest of the world; no chance of any communication getting out of there by railroad, wagon-road, telephone, telegraph, messenger or—— . . . What's that?" His voice became ugly. "Impossible? Don't try to pull anything like that on me! And don't waste any more time talking. I've told you what I want. Now do I get it, or don't I?"

There was a pause, and then Gabriel cut in again.

"Might be a loss of life, you say? Oh, look here; I don't want to listen to a lot of old-woman objections. What I'm after is action, and damn quick action at that—— . . . Hello! . . . Yes, this is Gabriel. . . . What d' y' say? . . . How the hell, do I know how it's to be done? That's up to you. If you can't manage a little thing like this, seems to me it's about time we were getting some brains at the head of that company of yours."

The open threat obviously bludgeoned Allison into compliance; for, listening to the reply, some of the lines of irritability on Gabriel's face smoothed out.

"Well, that sounds better," he said grudgingly. "But remember—no stalling, Allison. This means a lot to me, and I won't stand for any excuses. Get busy."

With that he clapped the receiver on its hook, and turned scowling to DeVries.

"That fellow's got a crust," he grumbled, "trying to argue with me. By gad, if he isn't careful I will put the skids under that two-by-four job of his. I guess I made it plain, though, what he can expect if he don't deliver. For all his prayer-meeting scruples, he won't dare fall down on me."

AND this assumption of Gabriel's proved correct; for from some mysterious source a message came that night to the cabin of Bud Fordney, a Stony Creek mountaineer, who, with no visible means of support beyond a little desultory hunting and fishing, seemed to be always well supplied with money.

The message, innocent enough on its face, was nevertheless conducive to great activity. Bud Fordney, as soon as he had decoded it, roused up his brothers, Smith and Joel; and the three hastened up the mountainside.

By covert routes they made their way over rocks and through the underbrush, until they reached the edge of an artificial lake maintained as a fishing-preserve by a number of wealthy men in near-by Ohio River towns.

A natural pool, fed by several mountain streams, it had been widened and deepened so as to cover twenty or thirty acres by means of a dam constructed at the lower end. At present its size was increased; for a season of rain had swelled the brooks and runs of the section, and the lake was brimful, with a foaming cascade pouring over the spillway of the dam.

Warily skirting the edge, and careful to leave no tracks, the Fordney brothers satisfied themselves that no one was about and the old caretaker safely asleep in his shack.

Bud tugged a gold-filled watch with an illuminated dial from his trousers pocket.

"Got to hurry up," he muttered. "Smith, you tote the box up the hillside, and Joel, you fetch me down the wires."

He ducked down into the ravine below the dam and burrowed into the rocks that formed its foundation. In a few minutes he emerged, dragging two strands of wire which he connected with those brought him by Joel. These wires of Joel's ran back to the square box on the hilltop, which Smith had unslung from his shoulders.

Satisfied with their preparations, Bud and Joel climbed swiftly up to join Smith beside the "box," a battery of the usual type used in blasting operations.

"Let 'er go!" Bud whispered the order, and Smith, with a forward hunch of his shoulders, thrust down the plunger.

There was a muffled detonation which shook the hills, and then a roar as the dam went out in a spouting eruption of foam and rocks. The water held for a moment, then leaped through the opening and with the solidity of a wedge swirled out of the ravine and down the valley—carrying with it great boulders and sections of masonry, uprooting trees, shearing away masses of earth and stone, obliterating everything in its path.

With the first crash of the explosion, Bud and Joel Fordney began jerking in the wires, while Smith swung the battery back to his

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shoulders; and, with the escaping rush of the water pounding on their ears, the three were off up the slope.

As they reached the crest of the rise above the lake, slipping shadowlike among the trees, they heard the whistle of a train—the train which Constance Lee and John Bell were taking for the junction.

Joel Fordney turned and looked back, with something like misgiving.

"That's the 'leven o'clock a-pullin' out from th' old Logan place," he said. "By gorry, she'll jest about git ketched, crossin' the long trestle."

"That ain't none of our lookout." Bud shoved him impatiently. "C'mon, ye darn fool. We want to be gittin' out of this."

IN JOHN BELL'S long career as a private detective, he had never before changed sides; and although he felt fully justified in his present course, his settled habit of loyalty acted as a prod to conscience all the way, as he journeyed from Cincinnati to Mrs. Lee's retreat in the Cumberlands.

By the time he reached the little railway station in the hills, his scruples had become so exigent that he was almost ready to abandon his purpose and go back to New York.

But as he stepped to the platform the first person he saw was Mrs. Lee herself. She looked so young, so delicately fair, in every way so unfitted to cope with the machinations of such case-hardened sinners as DeVries, Beachey and Gabriel, that his decision was strengthened. He would stand by his wife's judgment and his own inclinations. This woman needed him, if any one ever did.

She had glanced eagerly at the two or three alighting passengers, and as she saw that no one else followed them, a shadow of disappointment fell over her face.

"I'll bet it's Jeffries she's looking for." Bell was shrewd in his surmises. "She was expecting him, or maybe hoping that he would come, and he hasn't showed up."

There was a quality in Constance Lee's beauty which made a sure appeal to the protective instinct in man. The enigmatic contrast of her wistful eyes and radiant, insouciant smile supplied the provocative touch of mystery; and by some grace of temperament she robbed her vivid loveliness of assertion and allowed it to steal softly upon the observer, continually charming him by some new revelation.

It was this quality which had swept Clay Jeffries off his feet; it had enchained the cynical and fastidious Beachey; it had even dented the selfish shell of Perry Gabriel. And now the stolid, matter-of-fact detective was unconsciously yielding to its spell.

As she turned to leave the station, he lifted his hat and spoke to her.

"I beg your pardon, Mrs. Lee, but I'd like to have a word with you. My name's Bell, John Bell; I'm a New York detective."

He had drawn a worn silver badge from his pocket, and he showed it to her, half-hidden in his palm. She gave him a startled glance, and drew back.

"Don't be frightened," he said. "I only want to help you out. I've got hold of some information that I think you'd like to know."

She studied him keenly before she put the cautious question:

"What sort of information?"

"The whole bag of tricks." He gave a comprehensive wave of his hand, the thumb thrown out, the fingers spread. "Lord! I've been shadowing you for four months, Mrs. Lee, working for the other side. This isn't the first time I've been up in this country. I know things about your affairs that would make you jump."

This statement, instead of reassuring her, only increased her distrust. She looked at him haughtily through half-closed eyelids.

"If you know anything that you think would be of advantage to me, you had better see my lawyer, Mr. Beachey. He attends to all my business matters."

With a curt bow, she turned to cross the village street toward the general store. But Bell was not to be shaken off. He followed, keeping in step with her.

"Beachey'd be the one to see, all right," he said, "if I was selling out my clients or figuring on a shake-down. That's what you think I'm up to. But you've got me wrong, Mrs. Lee, and if you'll give me five minutes I'll prove it to you. Besides," he added, "this isn't all business. There's a personal slant to it. So I prefer to deal direct."

She stopped and studied him again, keeping her poise with an effort. A stodgy man in black clothes, with a commonplace face under a derby hat. Private detectives, she

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Great logs catapulted at them . . . drenching them with spray.

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had always heard, were, like princes, not to be trusted—they were unreliable and despicably venal. Yet, as she doubtfully, even contemptuously surveyed Bell, she caught an impression of friendliness and sincerity.

She softened faintly but perceptibly.

"I am waiting for the mail to be distributed." She motioned toward the store, which was also the post-office. "That will take about five or ten minutes—time enough for you to convince me that it is worth my while to listen to you. Go on—or, no"—quickly—"there are some questions I want to ask you first. You say that you have been shadowing me for four months and have been in the Cumberlands before. For whom were you acting?"

Her gaze was so earnest and searching that Bell, noting also that her voice, in spite of her efforts to control it, was tremulous, realized how tremendously important his answer was to her.

"I can't answer that," he said slowly, "I've already told you I'm not here to sell out."

"Oh, your scruples!"—in angry scorn. "You can spare them. We knew when you were here before, and we knew, too, that you were sent by—Judge Jeffries."

In her heart she did not believe that it *was* Jeffries; but she threw the assertion out as a bait, hoping to draw from the man some inkling of his real connections and purpose. A thrill of joy went over her as she saw Bell's expression of surprise.

"Judge Jeffries?" he stammered.

She was quick to follow up her advantage.

"Oh, don't appear so astonished." Her lip curled. "Who else had any interest in identifying me as Caroline Logan, graduate of a reform school and adopted waif? And why make a secret of it? In his suit for the recovery of this coal-land, it was natural, I suppose, that he should try to find out all he could about me."

Bell looked at her gravely.

"If you really think that," he said, "you're wrong. Judge Jeffries never had any idea that you were Caroline Logan until Perry Gabriel told him so."

"Perry Gabriel?" Her voice was harsh with amazement.

"Yes, ma'am. It was out at the Jamaica track. Didn't DeVries ever write you about it? I was with Gabriel, and I'd cautioned him to keep his mouth shut. But the first thing he did was to pick a quarrel with Judge Jeffries and blurt out that you were a high-jacking adventuress, traveling under a false name. Then the judge started for him, and the yellow cur jumped behind me and began hollering for me to protect him. But it didn't do him any good. I guess the judge would have finished him if DeVries and a bunch of stable-hands hadn't pulled him off."

She listened as one in a dream. Gabriel had done this? Gabriel, who had pursued her feverishly and unremittingly, who had asked her to marry him and then had drifted out of her life, accepting her refusal, she supposed, as final?

"Perry Gabriel?" she repeated. "But why should he——" She asked the question as much of herself as of Bell. She did not doubt Bell's story. It was too circumstantial, too straight. And, accepting it, her mind leaped to another conclusion.

"Was it Gabriel, then, who sent you out here before to look me up?"

Bell had not expected this. He covered his temporary confusion with one of his owlishly blank stares and tried to counter.

"Who was it told you that Judge Jeffries was the one?" he asked. "Beachey?"

She gave him a frowning glance and stood silent, thinking. Beachey had never told her directly that it was Jeffries; but he had always intimated it.

Two days ago she would have staked everything on her faith in Beachey and his devotion to her interests. But since then he had visited her, and she had discovered by chance that he was using her maid as a spy upon her movements. Thereupon, by employing various feminine ruses, she had trapped him into an unconscious admission that he had been disingenuous with her in other matters.

And if he had deceived her in one respect, why not in all? He was in love with her, she knew. She knew, too, his subtle, circuitous way of achieving a purpose. So she could not help but wonder if the curious chain of events which had served to separate Jeffries and herself had not been of Beachey's forging, aided and abetted by Perry Gabriel. Did this detective know? How much did he know? It was on her lips to ask him, but she checked the impulse. Within the last forty-eight hours she had

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found herself in such a web of intrigue and deception that she was fearful of every one, apprehensive that his offer of aid was only another trick. And yet he seemed genuine.

As she stood there, confused, unsure of herself, doubting all the world, the little crowd about the post-office began to push inside. The mail was ready for delivery.

"Wait a moment," she said to Bell, welcoming the interruption. "I wish to see if there are any letters for me. Then, if you don't mind, we will walk out to my house and can talk on the way."

She hurried across the street. As Bell had suspected, she had gone to the station in the hope of finding Jeffries on the train; for after that conversation with Beachey two nights before she had at once written to Jeffries—a mere request to place some money for her on his horse in the forthcoming Wide-awake, but enough, she believed, to bring him to her.

He had not come. But perhaps there was a letter from him?

THE wrinkled, old postmaster, however, simply shook his head as she presented herself at the window. She turned away; and Bell noticed the expression of hurt pride and disappointment on her face as she came out of the store and beckoned him to join her.

They walked along in silence until they were clear of the village and trudging together up the rutted mountain road. It was a murky day; there had been what the natives called a "long wet spell," and although it was not raining now, the sky was heavy and overcast, and it looked as though it might pour again at any moment.

"Mr. Bell," Constance said at last, "had you any especial reason for asking if Louis Beachey was the one who suggested that Judge Jeffries was responsible for your investigation of me?"

He considered this, his gaze on the mist-hidden hills.

"Only that it was Beachey who tipped off my client that you were Caroline Logan. Or so, at least, my client said."

With all her growing distrust of Beachey, this came as a shock almost too staggering for belief.

"Beachey told that to Gabriel? But why? Why?"

"I haven't said it was Gabriel."

"Stop quibbling!" she cried. "You said you wanted to help me, and Heaven knows I need it. If we are to get anywhere, you and I must be candid and frank. I am willing to take the risk if you are."

"Fair enough," Bell conceded, after another pause for thought. "That is, if, like in court, I'm not compelled to answer regarding privileged communications."

She threw out her hands impatiently.

"Answer or refuse to answer what you please, so long as you straighten out this tangle for me."

"I think, maybe, I can do that, ma'am."

"Very well, then. For my part, I have begun to suspect every one with whom I am closely connected. They all—my maid, my attorney, every one—seem to be in a conspiracy to deceive me. Will you tell me why, of all people, Perry Gabriel should have employed a detective to look me up?"

"Well," Bell answered reluctantly, "he figured that you were the one who had been blackmailing him."

"Blackmailing him! Blackmailing! I? What are you talking about? Blackmailing him?"

"Yes, ma'am." Bell stood his ground. "Beachey had been squeezing him out of a lot of money, you see, on the strength of some crooked business deals that Gabriel had bragged about to you, and Perry couldn't see it any other way but that you were back of the hold-up."

Constance gave a horrified gasp and closed her eyes. For a moment Bell thought she was going to faint.

"I remember," she said dazedly, "that one night, at my apartment, he was boasting of the money he had made in some rascally transactions. I don't remember what they were; I only recall being disgusted at the idea of a man of his wealth stooping to such things. And to think that he dared suspect me of——" She broke off. "And Beachey, you say, got money from him on the strength of it? Oh, I don't believe it! Beachey would have killed him for such an accusation."

"As I understand it," Bell said dryly, "Beachey rather led him along to think that it was so. Beachey's deep, Mrs. Lee—hard to tell what he's up to. Exactly what his game was in this case I don't know. I might guess, but the chances are that you could

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guess better. So it strikes me that my play is to spill the whole works and let you decide what you want to do.

"To begin then, I was hired by Gabriel to get the goods on you as a blackmailer. I followed you down to Atlantic City and saw you make the acquaintance of Judge Jeffries. You'll forgive me"—apologetically—"but I believed then you were out to trim him. I hadn't any doubt of it, when I found that he had given you the inside on this lawsuit of his to recover the Logan coal-lands. 'Here's where she and Beachey cashes,' I said to myself. Then I tumbled to the truth. You weren't vamping him; it was straight goods. You were—well, you liked him pretty well, and he was certainly in love with you."

Constance looked quickly away, the color flooding up to her face. But Bell went on, without appearing to notice her embarrassment.

"Gabriel came down, and I showed him the two of you together. Even that pinhead could see what was on, and he went up in the air. 'You frame that woman!' he tells me, and chases back to New York. Next day he sends for me, and I find him licking his chops. 'No need to frame her,' he says. 'I've had a tip from Beachey. She's the mysterious Logan heiress that Jeffries is suing for those coal-lands. You go out to Kentucky and trace up Caroline Logan.

"I did. I found out that Caroline Logan, the adopted daughter and heir of Woodson Logan, had been in a reform school; but I couldn't get the one link of evidence to positively identify her with Mrs. Norman Lee. Gabriel wouldn't wait, though; he had to throw it in Jeffries's face—and get punched for his pains.

"It was up to me then to hustle for the proof. But, instead, I stumbled on to something that made it look like we'd been wrong, and I went to Gabriel with it. 'Mrs. Lee's not Caroline Logan any more than I am,' I said, and he fired me.

"Then afterward I found I'd been handed a bum steer. Maybe you know about it. It was a picture of some reform-school girls. It was in a drawer of your desk, and the name, 'Caroline Logan,' was written under one of them that wasn't you."

She puckered her brows.

"There was such a picture," she said, "but I didn't know I had it. I haven't seen or thought of it for years."

"No? Well, I guess, then, your maid, Delia, planted it there. She's a slick one. But let that pass. What I'm getting at is that later on I dug up an unquestionable photograph of you in your reform-school dress. At last, I had my proof.

"My first idea was to light right out to Gabriel with it. But my wife says: 'No. He's treated you like a dog,' she says, 'and you're through with him. What you're going to do now is to get on the right side,' she says. 'You're going to swing over to Mrs. Lee.' So that's the way I happen to be here."

Constance looked at him with a tremulous smile on her lips. There were, then, some generosity, some kindness left in the world.

"Some day I shall try to thank Mrs. Bell for that." There were tears in her eyes.

"And what is your idea now?" she asked.

"Well, my wife thought you'd probably want me to work for you, and I believe I could make myself useful."

"I am sure you could," Constance said. "But what is there to do? It's such a dirty mess, and all past history. What would be the advantage of stirring it up again? I have already decided to cut myself off entirely from all those people."

"But it isn't past history, Mrs. Lee." Bell spoke sternly. "They're still at it. There's a scheme on right now between Gabriel and DeVries to use your stable to pull off the biggest swindle in the history of the turf. And Beachey has horned in on 'em for his bit, too."

"Use my stable—the biggest swindle——" She clutched his arm. "What are you saying now?"

As briefly as he could, although with many interruptions on her part, he gave her the details. Before he had finished she turned and started to run toward the village.

"What are you going to do?" demanded Bell, catching up with her.

"Why, stop them, of course—telephone, telegraph."

"No!" Bell halted her. "That would only give them a chance to cover up. What you want to do is to catch them dead to rights. Now, listen; you and me'll go to Cincinnati and drop down on 'em

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without a word of warning. If you telephone, they'd only say I'd lied."

The prey of doubts again, she looked at him piercingly.

"How do I know that you are not lying?"

"Come with me to Cincinnati, and find out. We can't get a train before eleven o'clock to-night, but that will get us there in plenty of time. Will you go, ma'am?"

"Yes, I'll go," she said determinedly. "Nothing could keep me back."

DELIA, sitting on the porch preparing some vegetables for dinner, rose hastily, gathering them up in her apron, as she saw Constance and Bell far down the road.

She flew into the house and peeped cautiously from the window. Who was this man, and why had he come? And then, as the two turned in at the gate and came up the weed-grown drive, she saw Bell plainly and recognized him at once. It was the detective who had been at the apartment that morning in February.

Why was he here? Her mind leaped to one conclusion: it must be for her. Too frightened to reason the thing out, she gave way to panic. And as Bell and Mrs. Lee reached the house, she ran down the cellar steps and hid behind a pile of packing-boxes.

She heard Constance move through the rooms, calling her, but she only crouched lower and made no answer. Constance returned to the porch.

"Queer," Delia heard her say to Bell. "She rarely goes out. Shall we sit here until she comes?"

Her curiosity overmastering her fears, Delia stole over to one of the small cellar windows just at the side of the porch. The voices came to her distinctly enough for her to gather the gist of the conversation.

As she listened, her personal apprehension vanished, but a new anxiety took its place. DeVries and his scheme were threatened. And what a scheme it was! No wonder he had called it a "killing." At once she saw its opportunities. DeVries had not exaggerated. If he could put it through, it meant all the things she had longed for, dreamed of—marriage, diamonds, luxurious jazzy days at one gay racing-resort after another. And now this prying detective had spotted it, and was here planning with Mrs. Lee to prevent it.

Her fingers curved. She wanted to throttle him. He shouldn't get away with it. She vowed he should not. But what could she do? She was helpless—one against two. Yet some way she must get word to DeVries—and at once.

This would have been an easy matter if Constance were still the trustful mistress of two days ago. But ever since the evening when Mrs. Lee had overheard the conversation between Beachey and herself, she had been under suspicion, and she wisely guessed that any excuse she made to go to the station would be promptly investigated by Bell.

Delia, however, was quick at expedients, and soon one suggested itself. The two on the porch still had their heads together; she felt fairly safe. So, creeping up the cellar steps at the back of the house, she ran across the kitchen garden between two rows of blackberry bushes and climbed the hillside to where the old man who chopped their wood was clearing out underbrush.

She handed him a slip of paper on which she had stopped to scribble a message before leaving the cellar.

"Take this down to the telegraph office at the station," she directed, "and don't waste any time getting there. You'd better go this way"—pointing to a path which led out of sight of the house.

"And here"—she turned away for a moment to get a five-dollar bill from her stocking—"after you've paid for the wire, you can keep what's left for yourself."

She knew that, with such an amount to expend on moonshine whisky, there was small chance of his turning up again that evening, to be questioned about his absence.

Then, with him despatched on his errand, she hastily wove a loose basket of rushes and, having filled it with wild strawberries to serve as an excuse for her disappearance, returned to the house.

Mrs. Lee came in from the porch at the sound of her step in the back entry.

"Delia, you won't mind being left here alone to-night, will you?" The quick glance of surprise Delia gave was an admirable piece of acting. "I am compelled to go," Constance continued, "to leave at once this evening. I shall take only a bag with me, and leave you behind to pack up and close the house. Then you can come on and join me in New York."

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"Oh, that will be all right," Delia nodded. "I don't mind being alone at all."

Her tone was impassive, but there was a slight stiffness in it which she could not control. She had noticed and jealously resented the unaccustomed reserve, the evasion by Mrs. Lee of any mention of her decision to go to Cincinnati, so leaving the inference that she was bound directly for New York. It was a significant departure from the old frank confidence between them.

"And, by the way, Delia, there is a—a Mr. Bell here. He will stay for dinner and leave with me on the eleven-o'clock train."

Again that look of well-feigned surprise. Delia knew that any other attitude on her part would rouse question; for during all their stay in the mountains, Beachey had been the only other visitor—therefore the lifting of the eyebrows and a compression of the lips, as if shutting off an involuntary question.

But Constance did not bother to explain. Indeed, she found a certain satisfaction in making Delia feel that she was no longer worthy of trust.

She went back to the porch, and thereafter, until train-time, she and Bell were most guarded in their communications.

Delia, as she listened to them at the dinner-table, exchanging their careful commonplaces about the country and the weather, had to turn her head to hide a contemptuous smile. For all their assiduous precautions, she had spiked their guns. Let them go to Cincinnati if they wanted to. Jim was forewarned, and he was smart enough to outwit them in some way. Her stormy spirit exulted in the trick she had played them.

At last they were gone, the buckboard which took them to the station splashing through the puddles on the dark, mountain road.

DELIA stood in the doorway, looking after them until they were swallowed up in the rainy murk. Then, locking up the house and covering the kitchen fire for morning, she went to her room.

Rain-drops pattered outside on the shingles of the porch roof; the wind moaned in the trees; the old house gave voice to eerie noises. But, on edge with excitement and suspense, Delia paid no heed to the loneliness and the night. To quiet her nerves she got a thin bundle of letters from DeVries out of her trunk, and seated herself by the lamp to reread them.

There were only four brief scrawls, written on half-sheets of paper, and they told very little. DeVries had certainly been chary enough of information. Never once did he give a hint as to the nature of his plans. But in each letter was a somewhat indefinite promise—that, if she stood by him, she would soon wear diamonds.

As she finished with them Delia hissed angrily. Now that she had a fair idea of the scheme and its magnitude, she was indignant that she had not been told of it and allowed to come in as a partner. Why hadn't Jim included her? He couldn't have been afraid that she would peach. And what other reason was there for not taking her into his confidence? She had proved her loyalty to him often before, and he knew that he could depend on her discretion. Even now—to-day—it was she who had saved his bacon. If she had not sent word to him that Connie and that meddling detective were on his trail, his plans would already be blah.

She wondered how he would meet this new situation without her. If he had any sense, he would kidnap the detective and chloroform Connie until the race was over, and he had collected and made his getaway.

His getaway! Darkly brooding, she twisted the letters in her strong fingers. Deep in her heart she knew the insecurity of her hold on him. She was always trying to strengthen that hold—and how far had she succeeded?

As she sat there, she began to picture DeVries with his pockets full of money, and perhaps the necessity of a rapid departure before him. How much thought would he give to her—or, how little?

In a violent reaction she tore the twisted letters across, and, throwing them on the floor, got up and paced restlessly back and forth, her hands pressed to her temples.

But still those thronging pictures filled her mind. DeVries, free, rich, moving from one foreign racing-resort to another with never a thought of her. And she, dismissed by Mrs. Lee, out on her own.

She stopped abruptly and sat down on the nearest chair, suddenly calm.

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This was a contingency that had never occurred to her, but, considering the events of the last two days, and Constance's changed manner to her, it was almost a certainty.

Dismissed by Connie! No longer with her, to look after her, to share her difficulties and rejoice in her successes! Delia had never before stopped to reckon with the depth and strength of her maternal love for the bright-haired, daring little girl whom she, the older one, had taken under her wing at the reform school.

They had clung together there, and later, when Constance became heiress to the Logan fortune, her first thought had been for her, Delia. She had offered to set her old schoolmate up in business; but Delia had no desire for a business career, and had chosen instead to remain as Mrs. Lee's maid, a position which suited her exactly.

And now, for the sake of a man who had used her to feather his own nest and had refused her even his confidence, who had always—she saw that now with a sort of dreadful clarity—taken her blind love with careless indifference, she had sold Connie out, she had estranged her forever.

She started up wildly. But as she did so, there was a sudden rumble and roar from back in the hills which shook the house and set the windows to rattling.

NERVOUS in a thunder-storm, Delia stepped to the window to close the shutters. But as she threw up the sash and leaned out, she paused. There were no flashes in the sky, no looming black pall overhead. Instead, the clouds were breaking away toward the east, and through them she caught glimpses of the moon. Also, although the pealing crash had sounded two minutes before, the deep reverberations still continued.

Wondering what it could mean, she peered out into the darkness and listened. Lights were beginning to twinkle from cabins along the ridge; the whole countryside seemed to be wakened. And still that mysterious, rolling rumble filled the air.

She heard the thud of hoof-beats on the road, and a horseman passed at a gallop. Others followed. Then a straggling procession of people on foot—long-striding mountaineers with swinging lanterns. The crowd which a calamity always draws, even in the wilderness, was gathering.

Delia threw a cloak about her and, lighting a lantern herself, hurried down to the road.

"What is it?" She intercepted a lank, bearded moonshiner.

"Dam at th' fishin'-camp went out. They say ez how th' 'leven-o'clock train on the branch got ketched at the long trestle, an' everybody on it was kilt."

"Oh, my God!" She reeled and would have fallen, if he had not caught her.

"Hold up thar! What's wrong with yuh?" he asked, as he steadied her.

She did not stop to answer. Jerking loose from him, she was off down the road, her flying footsteps leaving him distanced.

Panting, stumbling over the ruts, she reached the tracks. Here the lanterns were thicker; a steady stream of people was bobbing along the ties. She wondered dully where they all came from, chiefly because they hindered her progress and got in her way.

Round a curve she ran. The roar of rushing waters rose louder in her ears. Then she suddenly stopped.

The track ended abruptly on a sea of wild water. The torrent from the broken dam had spread out here over a stretch of low-lying bottom land. Across it the railroad had been built on a long trestle, leading to a bridge about three-quarters of a mile away.

But now the trestle was gone. Only bent and twisted stumps of its supports projected above the swirling flood.

Delia pushed down into the crowd on the bank. Her breath was coming in sobbing gasps; the tears were streaming down her face.

"Wasn't any one saved?" She clutched the arm of a man beside her. "The whole train was swept away?"

"All but that." He pointed across the welter of foam to a preserved span, and Delia saw that a single railway-coach still hung to the end of the structure, half in and half out of the water. "The train was out on the trestle when the flood poured out of the ravine." The man was one of those eager narrators always found at the scene of catastrophe. "Jack Hayes, the engineer, seen it coming—a solid wall of water twelve-foot high, they say—and he knew he could never reach t'other side of it,

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nor yet reverse and back off before it hit. So he stopped there on that high spot, hoping the weight of the train would hold her. It did, long enough for the folks aboard to pile out and make their way back to shore. Some trip, I'll say—over them stringers, with the hull trestle waggling and wabbling. And the last of the crew was hardly off before this high span went down, carrying two cars with it. Then the front stretch caved, and the engine and baggage-car went. That there little piece of trestle, and the one coach is all that's left now, and prob'ly——"

"But the passengers were saved?" Delia shrilly interrupted him. She caught him with both trembling hands. "The people got off—all of them."

"Didn't I tell you? Sure they got off. They're up there in a bunch now." He waved his hand toward the top of the bank. "Ed Grimes, the conductor, is getting their names and everything."

Delia dashed up the slope and pushed into the center of the group. She ran her eyes over the ring of lantern-lit faces; then turned wildly to the conductor who, notebook in hand, was getting material for his report.

"Where's Mrs. Lee?" she demanded. "Mrs. Constance Lee? She was on that train."

The conductor made a gesture of exasperation.

"Ain't I got nothing to do except be bothered about Mrs. Lee?" he barked. "When she found out that there was no way of getting through, and maybe won't be for a week—road-bed 'll be washed out all the way down, the wagon-roads in just about as bad shape, and the telephone and telegraph wires all out of commission—she hunted up a rowboat and her and a fellow named Bell started off. We tried to stop them—it's nothing short of suicide—but they wouldn't listen, and pulled out about twenty minutes ago. There they go now, down by the bridge."

He pointed far out across the dark, tumbling waters to a tiny spark of lantern light. Delia's horrified eyes followed the direction. The little, far-away glimmer of light twinkled for a moment on an uplifting wave, rocked far to one side, and then swept out of sight as the boat passed round a bend.

THE craft which Constance had commandeered for her hazardous voyage was one of those flat-bottomed, scowlike punts, known along the Ohio River and its tributaries as "john-boats"—merely a few unpainted boards nailed together and provided with a rude pair of oars.

Bow and stern exactly alike, and without semblance of a keel except for a thin strip of plank along the bottom, it was under ordinary conditions a slow, awkward and unwieldy means of transportation. But in a freshet like this one could make progress by simply letting it travel with the current; and it possessed two distinct advantages; it was not easy to upset, and since it drew but an inch or two of water, it could slide over hidden rocks and sand-bars where a shapelier vessel would quickly come to grief.

Bell, when Mrs. Lee first proposed the trip, looked dubiously from the clumsy thing to the swirling, drift-laden torrent and shook his head. He could only think that the experience they had just been through had shocked her out of her senses.

"Nothing doing!" he said emphatically. "About all that's left us now is to hire some fellow to take a message for you, and have it relayed as a telegram to the track officials or judges."

"And let DeVries or Gabriel get it through some convenient leak? I thought we had agreed that the only safe plan was to take them by surprise."

"Yes. But how are we going to take them by surprise if we're drowned?" asked Bell, with gloomy pertinence.

"But we're not going to be drowned. It won't be the first time I've tackled high water in a john-boat—far riskier ones than this too. You forget that I was born and raised on the Kentucky River, and when a rise came I would ride the swift current on a log, a raft—anything that came handy. Do you think I am going to back down now, when so much depends on it?"

"All right. But how are we going to manage it? I'm about as much use in a boat as fins to a cat."

"Oh, I'll handle the boat. All you have to do is sit still and hold the lantern."

He picked up the bags and started down the bank.

"If you're game," he said stolidly, "I am."

Railroad men and flood-wise mountaineers gathered about them, dissuading

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them, urging them not to take such desperate chances. Nothing could induce one of them, they said, to adventure it.

Constance, listening unmoved to the Cassandra chorus, directed Bell to go forward with the bags and lantern and seat himself in the stern; and then, having pushed off, she took the oars and rowed out into the booming stream.

The current met them and set their cranky bark to careening dangerously; but with skilful management she quickly headed it about. The john-boat, sullenly yielding, hung poised a moment, then, catching the impetus of the flood, shot down toward the bend and the wrecked ruins of the bridge below.

Just this side was a low-lying point covered with stunted willows, which was now completely inundated, and the water from above, seeking the shortest cut, was pouring across it like a tide-race. Almost irresistibly the heavy boat was drawn in toward it—to be caught and swamped in those clutching branches—but flinging all her strength against the starboard oar, Constance fought inch by inch to the outer edge of the channel, and swung at its widest arc round into the river.

This maneuver, successful though it was, nearly proved their undoing; for in making the turn they were swept directly toward the central pier of the ruined bridge. Bell saw the solid pile of masonry looming ahead. He shut his eyes in anticipation of the inevitable crash. But again, by dexterous oarsmanship, she avoided the obstacle. They passed it with scarcely a foot to spare—so close that she had hurriedly to ship the oar on that side as they shot by.

And now for a moment the way was clear. She had a brief breathing-spell, if you could call it that with the short, choppy waves tossing them about and the flotsam a constant menace.

Great logs catapulted at them, sometimes leaping out of the water and splashing back so near that they were drenched with spray. Timbers, hen-coops, fence-rails, pigpens—all the nondescript wreckage of a freshet floated by.

SO THEY traveled mile after mile at express-train speed, pitching, tossing, yawing off on unexpected tacks, taking sudden, arrowlike dashes, whirled round to drift sidewise twenty feet before the boat could be righted, grazing hidden obstructions, rocking and reeling, bumped and battered—every second a new hazard, eternal vigilance the price not only of safety but of life itself—two bugs on a chip in a rain-flooded gutter.

The sky clouded over again, and the moon, which had been feebly trying to shine, was obscured. To their other perils was added that of a shrouding darkness.

All things end, though, one way or another. As they sped on, the blackness began to lift like a succession of veils. The trees along the shore, which had been a blur of denser black, commenced to assume individual shapes. The first gray light of morning stole across the water.

They rounded a bend, and saw a huddle of houses and a dominating church spire or two on the left bank. A tethered wharf-boat was lying up almost even with the top of the levee.

Constance rested on her oars a moment to gaze at the little town. Her wrists were numbed and swollen, her muscles aching from the long strain.

But the river, as if watching for a moment of negligence, caught them in a swirl, and drove the john-boat with a crash against a projecting snag.

Frantically she backed water, and by her efforts saved them from capsizing; but the damage was done. As they floated free again, the river came pouring in through a jagged hole in the side.

"Get the bucket!" she shrieked to Bell. "Bail!"

And as he obeyed and struggled against the rushing inflow, she threw the last of her strength into an endeavor to reach the shore. It was a close call, but they made it. At the racing-stroke, she drove the clumsy scow in alongside the wharf-boat. Bell lifted her to its deck, flung the bags after her, and then, as the john-boat filled to the gunwales and sank, leaped himself.

A blue-capped wharfmaster came running out to lend them assistance.

"What place is this?" Bell asked.

When he told them, they could hardly believe their ears. They had come sixty miles in a little over three hours.

"Any chance to get a train out of here?"

"That's as may be." The wharfmaster waggled his beard. "We're open to the

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main line, and they're running, I understand; but with all the upper end of the branch out of commission, whether they'd make up a train just to go twenty miles to the junction, I don't——"

"Never mind," Constance interrupted decisively. "We haven't come this far to be beaten. There must be some way of getting through—hand-car, wagon, automobile or something, even another boat. At the moment what I want more than anything else is a cup of hot coffee and a chance to dry myself."

Fortunately the wharfmaster was in a position to meet both requirements. He made up a roaring fire in the little stove in his office, and as they stood about it, their damp garments steaming in the grateful warmth while they recounted their adventures, he brewed them strong coffee.

Two cups of this, and Constance announced that she was ready to start for the railroad station.

Bell looked at her in incredulous wonder. She had been through a terrific ordeal. She was jaded, fagged for want of sleep, bedraggled. Her arms were so wrenched and sore from the tug of the oars that when she drank her coffee he had had to hold the cup to her lips. And yet she was undaunted. Bell recognized it as a triumph of the spirit over the weary flesh. The job she had taken on was not finished, and until it was, no matter what demand was made upon her, this woman would never show herself a quitter.

THAT same Friday morning DeVries was also out early. At seven o'clock he was at breakfast in a lunch-room just outside the Latonia track, with a morning paper propped up before him, eagerly absorbing the news of the flood over his bacon and eggs.

It was not, of course, his first tidings of the calamity in the Cumberlands. He had waited up with Gabriel the night before, until the bulletins of it were posted in front of the newspaper offices. Consequently, he had not reached Latonia, whither he had moved on Thursday with the metamorphosed Joybells and one or two other horses, until it was almost time for the early morning work-outs.

These proved entirely to his liking. True, he had not permitted Joybells to extend himself, for fear of revealing something to the watchful eyes of clockers and rail-birds, but the old horse was manifestly on edge, in perfect racing-fettle.

He was pretty sure, too, that no hint of the great secret had escaped. He had taken Uncle Ike and one or two of the other hands into his confidence, and these assured him that in all the track-gossip there was no suspicion of what was going on.

So, on the whole, DeVries, perched on his tall stool at the lunch-counter, was inclined to regard the world as pretty well all right. Those coal-company roughnecks had certainly done their work well. Now let Mrs. Lee and her wise-cracking bull know as much as they pleased; they'd have a hard time proving anything after the race was over and the winnings pocketed.

He had paid his check and was leaving the eating-place, when a reporter for one of the Cincinnati papers hailed him.

"You're stable-manager for Mrs. Constance Lee, aren't you?"

"Yeah."

"Well, what's she got entered for the opening to-morrow?"

"Mrs. Lee? Nothing. I've got a colt of Judge Jeffries', that's a candidate for the Wide-awake; but it isn't fully settled yet that he'll start. He's been off all season, and he's not yet exactly in shape to——"

The reporter was not interested.

"Then why is Mrs. Lee so anxious to make the opening of Latonia?" he probed. "Going through hell and high water to reach here in time?"

"Going through——" DeVries's jaw dropped, his eyes bulged.

"Sure! We just got a message. She and a fellow named Bell rode out that flood in a john-boat. Hadn't you heard about it? They're up at some burg on the branch now, waiting for railroad connections to get through, and expect to reach Cincinnati by this evening."

DeVries's face was gray.

"I've got to see about this," he muttered, starting off on a run. At the Latonia gate he picked up a battered flivver that served as a taxi-cab and, giving directions to make speed, set out for Cincinnati to consult with Gabriel.

But he had hardly covered half a mile before he changed his mind, and told the driver to take him to a house on the

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outskirts of Covington, the home of a deputy sheriff, a former tout with whom he was acquainted.

Bursting in on the official, he explained that he had come to ask a favor, and added that any assistance extended would not go unrewarded. Was there, he asked, a noted woman criminal wanted anywhere, who was slender, blue-eyed, and with red-gold hair?

The deputy sheriff, with complete understanding, began to paw over his collection of police-cards.

"Here's one that fills the bill, I reckon," he said presently. "'Torpedo-boat Sue,' Wanted in Philadelphia for a diamond robbery."

DeVries gave one glance at the card; then hustled the man out to the waiting cab and ordered the driver to take them to Gabriel's hotel in Cincinnati.

Three-quarters of an hour later, while flood extras were being called on the street, luridly featuring the exploit of Mrs. Lee, the deputy sheriff, a comfortable bulge of Gabriel's money in his inside pocket, filed the following telegram to the police authorities of various towns along the Ohio Valley:

Arrest and hold Madge Larrimore, alias "Torpedo-boat Sue," wanted for diamond robbery in Philadelphia. Slender, young, and has blue eyes and golden hair. Refined in manner. Is traveling with male accomplice who poses as a detective. They are reported as headed for Cincinnati. Woman will probably claim to be Mrs. Constance Lee, of New York. Detain both man and woman and notify me at once. Also do not allow them to communicate with any one before my arrival.

THERE is perhaps nothing in the world quite so hopeless as the attempt to get information at a country railroad station when the lines are in a tangle.

Constance and Bell, trying to find out when and how they could continue their journey, encountered only a maddening confusion, officials gruffly preoccupied and too busy to answer questions.

On such indefinite assurances as they could gather, they waited, held at the station from hour to hour by unfulfilled promises. Noon came, with its bells and whistles; one o'clock, two. And still the irritating delay.

At last, about four o'clock in the afternoon, a wheezing locomotive coupled to a passenger-coach and a string of freight-cars pulled out, and they were aboard. The engine crawled along, stopping at every culvert and bridge and fill to make sure that it was safe before venturing across.

Constance sat upright on the worn red-plush seat of the dingy day-coach, and stared out of the window at the dreary, rain-soaked landscape. She dared not let herself relax, or even recognize her weariness. Time enough for that, after she had settled with DeVries.

More than once, during the uncertainty of their tedious wait at the station, Bell had urged her to telegraph the track officials. She was not made of iron, he reminded her. Why must she take the whole burden of the thing on herself? Already overtaxed, she was simply heading for a collapse.

But she merely listened with her queer, little, I-have-just-begun-to-fight smile and ignored his protest. Her obstinacy on this point was inexplicable to him; but he finally understood that she was not to be swerved from her intention.

Her determination to meet the situation herself and sweep down like a whirlwind on Gabriel and DeVries was the incentive that had buoyed her up through the hazards of the past twenty-four hours and made her indifferent to the hardships. She must avoid notoriety, publicity at any cost. She would not have her reputation as a sportswoman smirched by even a whisper.

Upon her fatigue-numbed brain the rattle of the car-wheels beat a rhythmic refrain, and half-remembered words began to fit themselves to it:

> Of some one, who breasted high water,
> And swam the North Fork and all that,
> Just to—

The rest of it evaded her. Just what some one had breasted high water to do she could not recall. But, at any rate, merit had been acquired thereby. And as the words kept running over and over in her mind to the accompaniment of the wheels, she pictured Jeffries's face when he heard the story. She could see warm approval shining in his eyes.

But the palms and the pæans were not yet for her. The sequel to her adventure was not to be so easy, she found, when they arrived at the junction and were met by the announcement that the main-line express had been diverted to another route on

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account of flood-damage. All that was left them was to take a local to Portsmouth, where they would have to ferry across the Ohio and might get a train on a different line to Cincinnati.

Another tiresome, red-plush ride; but finally, Portsmouth. As they stepped to the platform and gazed about in the darkness for some indication of the way to the ferry, a hawk-nosed citizen in faded blue accosted them.

"Where are you folks bound to, may I ask?" He studied them from under his down-drawn hat brim.

"We're looking for the ferry," Bell answered. "We want to get a train on the other side for Cincinnati."

"Oh, you do? Well, instead, suppose you take a walk with me."

He threw back his lapel, and showed a badge inscribed with the words: "Town Marshal."

"Come along quiet now, and avoid trouble."

Bell laughed.

"Say, Captain, who do you think we are?" he asked, amused. "Why, look here, old top; I'm a detective myself." He brought out his own badge. "And this lady is Mrs. Constance Lee, of New York."

"Eggszackly." The uncertainty was gone from the marshal's tone; he spoke with authority. "Mrs. Constance Lee, alias Madge Larrimore, alias 'Torpedo-boat Sue,' alias I don't know what else. S'pose you never heard of that Philadelphia diamond robbery? Well, we won't argue about it. March up the street there, you two. Keep ahead of me and don't try no funny business. Lively now! Watch your step!"

Constance was inclined to resist indignantly; but Bell, knowing the autocratic methods of village officials, persuaded her to accept the situation until he could get the affair straightened out.

At the town lockup, Bell again endeavored to convince the man of the absurdity of his mistake. But, with the prospect of a big reward and the fame of nabbing two famous criminals, the marshal was in no mood to listen to anything he might advance.

One single concession he was willing to make; Constance, instead of being assigned to a cell, might occupy a room at his home. So, having placed the disgusted Bell behind the bars, he escorted her to his own modest frame dwelling and put her in charge of his wife.

ABOUT the same hour, Jeffries, who had driven in from a remote town in Kentucky, reached Beachey's hotel in Cincinnati to keep an appointment with him, a final conference on the coal-lands compromise.

Both of them had read the newspaper accounts of Constance's sensational achievement, and naturally the subject was uppermost in the mind of each. Jeffries, thinking Beachey might have heard from her or know what her object had been in taking such a frightful risk, was full of questions.

But Beachey professed himself quite unable to account for her escapade, and seemed genuinely worried and annoyed over what he characterized as her mad folly.

Nevertheless, her acute attorney had a more or less accurate idea of the facts. To his mind, this eager effort to reach Latonia before the opening of the race-meeting could only indicate one thing; that she had somehow got wind of the projected swindle, and was resolved, neck or nothing, to prevent it. He knew her too well to believe that she had been actuated by mere foolhardiness. Some deep, imperative motive had driven her to this desperate and uncalculated action.

Beachey had been in the court-room all day, and had known nothing of the circumstance until he glanced over the evening paper as he sat at dinner. Thrilled by the narrative, appalled at the danger she had incurred, he drew a sigh of thankfulness that the experience was safely over, and then his thoughts veered sharply to his own interest in the premises.

If Gabriel and DeVries were successful he stood to win a very decent fortune—something like a quarter of a million—a delectable prospect. But Constance's dramatic victory over the flood had put an extinguisher on any hopes of that sort. Or, wait! Had it? With such a stake as they had in view, would DeVries and Gabriel calmly accept defeat—allow her to appear and smash their golden egg if there were any way to prevent it?

He balanced a teaspoon on his finger, watching it oscillate as he considered; then, putting it down precisely, he rose and

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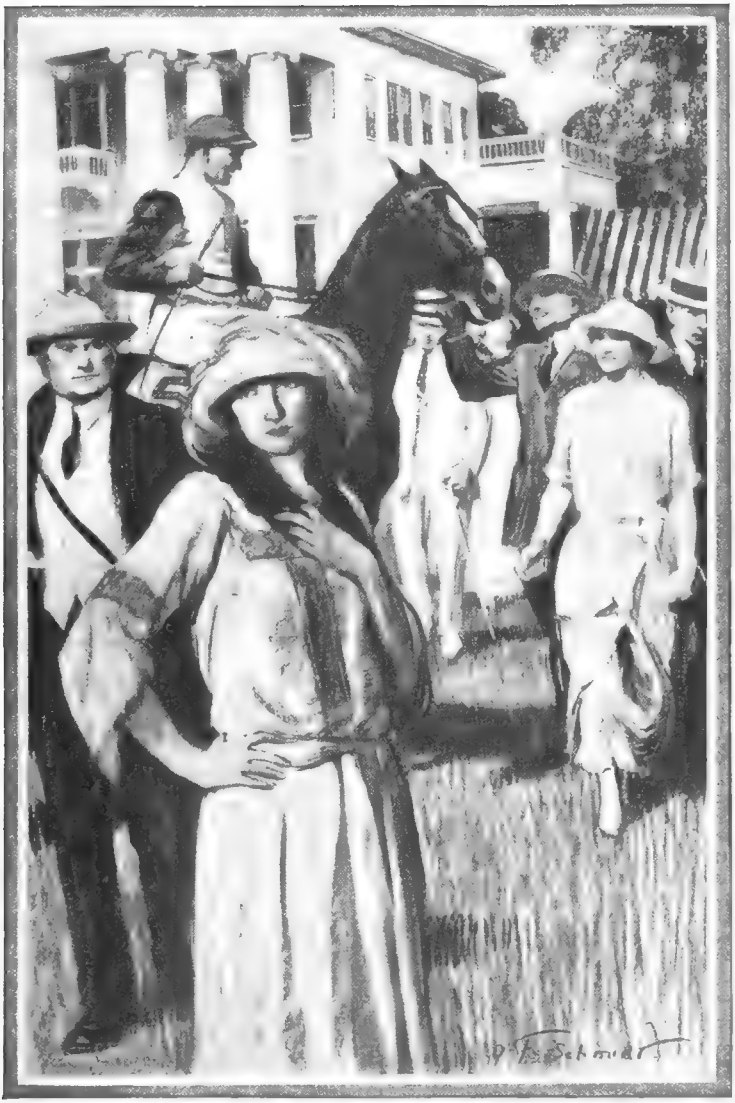

Constance went into the paddock and began a search for DeVries; but no one seemed to know where he was . . . Suddenly she heard her name called.

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crossed the dining-room to a table where Gabriel sat alone.

The latter gave a start as he heard himself addressed in suave, measured tones, and a quick, upward glance of apprehension.

"What do you want now?" he asked irritably. His nerves were on edge.

"Nothing, my dear fellow; nothing. I was only wondering if you had any later advices in regard to Mrs. Lee."

"Mrs. Lee!" Gabriel affected an air of unconcern. "How the devil should I know anything about Mrs. Lee?"

"Why, I assumed that like all her other friends you would be interested. I have been so occupied all day that I only learned of the affair just now; but I supposed that you, with plenty of leisure on your hands, would have heard the news much earlier and might possibly have kept in touch with the newspaper offices to get later details of her progress."

"Well, I did hear," Gabriel vouchsafed guardedly, "that she got down to that junction on the main line. That was the latest they had about her."

"Ah? And that means she will arrive in Cincinnati before midnight, eh?"

Gabriel seemed about to speak, but checked himself. Beachey drummed thoughtfully on the table with his finger-tips.

"Traveling is uncertain just now," he suggested, "and she may, of course, be delayed. There would be nothing strange in that—nothing nearly so strange as, for instance, the oddly opportune breaking of that dam." He leaned over, and dropped his hand suddenly on the other man's shoulder. "Listen, Gabriel," he said, "so far, I am sitting on the side-lines—merely a spectator, you might say. I have no wish to interfere with the game; it is not to my interest to interfere. But no rough play, remember. Strategy, tactics, ingenuity; yes. But any question of her personal safety and I shall take a hand. We understand each other, I hope?" And, bowing pleasantly, he returned to his own table.

BUT there was no hint of his real opinion of the matter in the later discussion with Jeffries.

"My dear Judge"—he shrugged away conjecture—"it seems idle to speculate why she did it. She will be here in an hour or so"—he glanced at the clock—"and then she can explain for herself."

"I doubt if it will be that soon." Jeffries frowned anxiously. "That is what is bothering me. Hadn't you heard that all traffic was annulled between here and Maysville?"

"You don't tell me?" Beachey looked as surprised as if he had not discovered that fact for himself half an hour before. "Still, that is no cause for anxiety. Mrs. Lee is a seasoned traveler; she will know what to do—either take another route or stop over somewhere until conditions improve. There is nothing we can do for her, so far as I see, except to take up this proposal of yours in regard to the coal-suit."

Jeffries assented, although he continued perturbed and abstracted; and the two plunged into a discussion of legal details. There was really very little chance for argument, though, since Jeffries was surrendering all claims. So, by the end of an hour, they had reached an entire agreement.

"Now," said Beachey, unable to conceal his satisfaction, "if you will wait a moment, Judge, I will get a stenographer and we will draft this into formal shape."

He had hardly left the room before the telephone-bell rang, and Jeffries answered the call.

"Is this Mr. Beachey?" asked a woman's voice—he would have known it anywhere in the world.

"Constance!" he cried. "Constance! Where are you?"

"Oh, Clay!" There was a tremendous relief in her tone. "To think I should have gotten you! I have so much to tell you, but I can't talk now. I need help. I am under arrest here at Portsmouth, on the Kentucky side."

"Under arrest!"

"Yes; on suspicion of being a diamond-thief called 'Torpedo-boat Sue.' It's absurd, but I must get out at once. I must, I coaxed the marshal's wife to let me telephone to Beachey. But, thank God, you answered. And don't tell him you have talked to me. I'm afraid of him. I don't trust him. You can get me out, can't you?"

"Can I? I will—if I have to turn the whole state of Kentucky upside down to do it. Trust me."

He clapped the receiver back on the hook and, snatching up his hat, started for the

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door. Outside, in the corridor, he met Beachey returning with the stenographer.

"I can't stop now," he said curtly. "Forgot something important. See you to-morrow." He was gone.

Down-stairs, in a telephone-booth, he fairly burned up the wires getting in touch with various influential men who lived in the neighborhood of Portsmouth. It took time, of course—centuries, it seemed to him—and more time until he got a report as to the result of his intervention.

But at last a call came to him from a lieutenant governor, announcing that Mrs. Lee and her companion were released from custody and were starting for Cincinnati. They would arrive at nine o'clock the next morning.

Jeffries was on hand to meet the train. It was two hours late. But at last it pulled in, and he ran down the platform as he saw Bell and a woman step off. It was not Constance, but Delia.

"Where is Mrs. Lee?" he asked, looking beyond the two at the alighting passengers.

Bell stared at him in amazement.

"Isn't she here? She should have got in at seven o'clock this morning." He turned and gripped Delia by the arm. "Look here; have you been giving me a wrong steer?"

"No. I told you the whole truth. I got in to see her at the marshal's house and changed places with her. She told me she could catch a midnight train. That's all I know."

Bell pondered this a second.

"On the chance that she's giving it straight, you'd better call up the hotels, Judge, and make some inquiries at other railroad stations. You'll find us in the waiting-room."

Jeffries wasted no time in getting to the telephone. Mrs. Lee, he found, was not registered at any hotel in Cincinnati, nor could he get any trace of her arrival in the city. He telephoned back along the line of every route she could have taken to ticket-sellers and station-agents. But not a shred of information. Apparently she had not left Portsmouth on either side of the river; but there was no news obtainable of her there. She seemed simply to have vanished.

WHILE Jeffries was at the telephone, broadcasting inquiries up and down the Ohio Valley, Bell led Delia to a secluded corner of the waiting-room, and motioned her to a bench.

Delia sat down, wringing her hands.

"Oh, I'm afraid something has happened to her!" she cried.

"Afraid?" Bell's face was hard; his eyes like blue marbles. "Come clean, Delia! Out with the whole thing now! Where is she?"

"I don't know! I don't know!"—wildly: "I'm afraid Jim DeVries has kidnapped her."

"And you were in on the deal? You notified DeVries when she and I left the Logan place. Come now; didn't you?"

She nodded, biting her trembling lip.

"But I never dreamed they'd blow up the dam to stop her," she wailed, "or that they'd——"

"Ah!" a grim light on his face. "So that was it? It wasn't an accident, then? And don't tell me you weren't in on it. As soon as the explosion was over, you hurried right out to see if it was successful, and report to them."

"I didn't!" — frantically. "My one thought was for Connie. Every step I ran down to the trestle, I was praying that she'd be saved. Why, if anything had happened to her, I'd have thrown myself right into the water after her.

"My God!" She twisted her wet ball of a handkerchief. "You don't know what I went through all that night and the next day, jolting over those mountain roads, headed off every way by the high water, twisting and turning; crossing at fords where the water was over the tops of the wheels, and all the time seeing her drowned, and knowing it was my fault.

"I never found out any better, either," she went on more quietly, "until I reached the junction an hour after your train had left. They told me she'd been there and had gone on with you to Portsmouth. But I knew she'd need me after all she'd been through—need me to pet her and look after her, like I've always done—and I got them to take me along on a freight train.

"Then, just as I told you this morning, at Portsmouth I ran into this hick marshal, and I got out of him about her being arrested. He wouldn't let me see her; so I went to his house and met his wife. She was a woman, and had some sense; and Connie had won her, like she does everybody else. So I got in.

Everybody's Magazine, October, 1923

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"Connie felt good, of course, over getting Judge Jeffries on the telephone; but still she was in a terrible wax. She was afraid he couldn't get her out in time for her to reach Latonia before the race, or else that Jim and Gabriel might scheme out some new way of stopping her.

" 'I must outwit them somehow.' She was walking up and down the room while she talked. 'I must get there in time myself. I can't leave it to anybody else, not even Judge Jeffries. There would be a scandal and a sensation, and I couldn't stand that.'

"Then she stopped all of a sudden and whirled on me. 'Delia, I've got it!' she said. 'You and I are going to change places. Quick now!'

"She made me undress and get into bed. Then she put on my hat and veil and the long cloak I was wearing, and called the marshal's wife.

" 'Mrs. Lee is pretty well done up,' she said, 'and I've persuaded her to go to bed.' She can mimic me almost perfectly if she wants to.

"Then she went out and shut the door behind her. And that's the last I know."

Bell looked at her skeptically.

"All right, Delia. Have it your own way. But it's not diamonds and a Havana trip with Jim DeVries that you'll get out of this; it's a long term in state prison. Don't think but what Judge Jeffries 'll see that you get the full limit." He glanced down the waiting room. "Here he comes now!"

But Jeffries, as he came toward them, looked anything but a personification of vengeance. He was a different man. Smiling, he waved an open telegram.

"It's all right!" he said. "News from Mrs. Lee herself. This telegram sent at nine o'clock this morning, but delayed in transmission, says that she is on her way down the river in a motor-boat and expects me to meet her at the track."

THE opening day at Latonia is to the Middle West what the Harvard-Yale football game is to the East, or the New Orleans Mardi Gras to the South.

June at its zenith, cloudless skies and golden sunshine, a natural amphitheater of green, Kentucky hills. The most picturesque race-course in America; the lawns in front of the club-house and stands are emerald velvet, the wide tracks smooth and lightning-fast, and in the infield a shimmering, mirrorlike lake surrounded by flower-beds that are glowing masses of color.

In the stables, on edge and groomed to a satin finish are the kings and queens of the turf—the horses whose names rank in the news of the day with those of presidents and prize-fighters and great financiers—and to see them fighting down to the wire for purses running into the thousands crowds flock from every direction.

From all over Ohio and Indiana and Kentucky the people come; the big owners and trainers of the East are there, the breeders and horse-lovers of the West and South. With the opening of the gates at eight o'clock in the morning until long after the races have started in the afternoon, there is a steady stream of humanity pouring into the enclosure to fill the stands to overflowing and pack, hundreds deep, along the rail for fully three-eighths of a mile. On that day all roads lead to Latonia, and they are choked with vehicles of every description. As a gathering of the multitudes, the spectacle can only be compared to Derby day at Epsom Downs.

But of all the thousands who made the pilgrimage on this especial opening day, there was none who employed a stranger means of transportation than Constance Lee, nor one who so ardently desired to reach the track in time.

When she had stolen from the marshal's house the night before, she was persuaded that she must continue her journey as obscurely as possible, lest Gabriel and DeVries, learning of her escape, should contrive some fresh method of hindering her.

The first and most important thing was to get across the river, and after blundering about through various back lanes in the darkness, she was finally lucky enough to reach the ferry.

But, to her consternation, the ferry-house was dark and deserted, the boat tied up, and no signs of a watchman about. As she stood there, hesitating what to do next, a dark figure shuffled up the bank toward her. She ran down to him.

"Can you tell me when the next boat leaves?"

"Ain't no more till six o'clock to-morrer mornin'."

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"But I can't wait until six o'clock!" she cried. "There must be some way of getting to the other side."

She noticed now that he was one of those almost amphibious characters to be found in river-towns, barefooted, frowzy, half-fisherman, half-loafer.

"Couldn't you take me?" she begged.

"S'pose I could. But I don't know ez I'd keer to resk takin' a passenger acrost in a rowboat. Current's awful tricky round yere. Mebbe"—appraising her—"ef you're willin' to go ez high ez ten dollars, I could hire Link Mellish's motor-boat. She'd make it all right."

"You can run it?"

"Ef I couldn't, Link wouldn't never trust me with it."

"Then go and get it." She took a ten-dollar bill from her bag. "Or, stop!" A sudden suggestion coming to her. "Do you think this motor-boat could take me to Cincinnati?"

"Take you to Noo Orleens, ef you wanted to go there. But not for no ten dollars."

"I'll give you a hundred to take me there; and if you make it by nine o'clock tomorrow morning you shall have two hundred. But remember you're not to tell—Link Mellish, is it?—or anybody else where you are going. You can say—oh, you can say that you have a moving-picture man who wants to take photographs of the flood, and will need the boat for a couple of days."

"That'll be all right. I don't even have to see Link; I got a key to the boat-house. He won't make no holler when he finds out all the money I've airnt for him."

She realized that she was taking a long chance as she followed the disreputable stranger along the river-bank to the little shack of a boat-house. There was nothing to prevent him from robbing and murdering her and then throwing her body into the river. He looked capable of it. But in for a penny, in for a pound.

Yet she had to confess that he gave no evidences of sinister designs, and when they had pushed off and she saw how carefully he looked out for her, she felt so secure that, wrapping herself in her long cloak, she lay down on the cushions in the bow and went to sleep.

Utterly worn out, she slept through the night and woke to find the sun high, the muddy river all about her shimmering and winking in the light of a glorious day. She sat up.

"Where are we?" she asked, and, looking at her watch, was surprised to find that it was almost nine o'clock.

"Well, we ain't at Cincinnati yit"—with a crestfallen grin. "Reckon I lose out on that bonus you promised me. Derned old engine's been cuttin' up monkey-shines all night. Couldn't git no speed out'n her at all."

A town was before them, and hoping that she might catch a train, Constance ordered a landing; but so indefinite and confused were the answers of railway officials that, recalling her experience on the way to the junction, it seemed best to stick to the motor-boat. So, after they had made a hasty breakfast, and she had sent her telegram to Jeffries, they once more embarked.

But the balky engine soon went wrong again, and although the ragged skipper swore and tinkered with it, he could only get it to run by fits and starts. Hour after hour they merely drifted, with him fussing over the motor, while she managed the wheel. And when, looking ahead, she saw at last the sooty smoke-screen and the bridges of Cincinnati, it was long after one o'clock. Her heart sank.

But at that moment—either because it got over its sulky fit or because the trouble had been remedied—the engine started. "Chug, chug, chug, chug," its staccato throb kept up, smooth and steady as a watch. At full speed they churned the remaining distance down the river and swept smartly to a stop on the Covington side, almost under the shadow of the suspension bridge.

Dragging a handful of bills from her bag, Constance flung them to her boatman and sprang ashore. Along the coal-docks she sped, and up a steep succession of streets to the bridge terminal, where she hailed a taxi-cab.

"Get me to Latonia before half-past two," she panted, "and I'll give you a hundred dollars."

The driver slammed the door on her, jumped to his seat and swung recklessly off. He was out to earn that extra money, and he tried his best. But the roads to Latonia on an opening day are merely processions of coming and going vehicles. There is little opportunity to get out of line. And the hands of the clock were moving steadily forward, with nothing to halt or obstruct

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them. In the contest, the clock won by four minutes.

As they reached the gate of the race-track, they saw a cloud of dust rise above the wire and heard the roar of shouting thousands.

"I've lost," said Constance, as she stepped out of the cab and paid her driver.

She could not stop to feel despair; she must find DeVries and see if anything could still be done.

Buying a ticket, she went inside.

"Look out!" warning voices yelled all about her.

She glanced up to see a streak of golden chestnut burst out of the paddock and come bearing down upon her. She sprang aside, just in time, as an unmistakable Bonny Bells horse galloped madly by, the stable-boy on his back unable to do more than merely cling on. Down the driveway he tore, out through the gate, and, still uncontrolled, disappeared in the direction of the hills.

"Looks like an overdose of slim-jack to me," a horseman near her cynically commented. "When a goat like Sleighbells can win the Wide-awake hands down, and then do a crazy runaway on top of it, there's sure something wrong."

Constance went into the paddock and began a search for DeVries; but no one seemed to know where he was. She was still inquiring when suddenly she heard her name called, and turning, saw Jeffries striding toward her, Bell and Delia behind him.

"You're here at last—and safe!" He caught her hands in a close, warm clasp. Then he laughed and straightened his shoulders. "I am throwing off tons of worry. Did you know that Sleighbells won the Wide-awake? Great; isn't it? And all due to you. DeVries has justified your belief in him." His expression altered as he looked at her. "But all that can wait. I want to hear about you."

She stood dumb, strangely white and limp. She wanted to speak, to tell him what had happened. But her voice was gone.

"You're tired, ill," he said tenderly. "I must get you to my car at once and back to the hotel. Delia!" he called. "Bell! Mrs. Lee is———"

A track-attendant interrupted him.

"Mr. Jeffries, the judge would like to see you in the stand, if you please."

He lifted his eyebrows.

"Bell, find my car, and look after Mrs. Lee." And then to Constance, in a lower voice, "I will be with you in ten minutes." He raised his hat, and walked away.

Constance's eyes, filled with anguished reproach, turned to Bell.

"Why didn't you stop it?"

"I thought you would be here in time," he said miserably. "We were looking for you everywhere; but I never doubted we had just missed you in the crowd until the race was started."

"But you let him believe that he had won."

"What else could I do? I didn't want to butt in, then."

There was nothing more to say. She leaned heavily on Delia's arm. A curtain of blackness wavered before her eyes. The crowds about her seemed unreal, the whole scene illusory. She had failed. She had spent her last ounce of strength—and failed.

She let Bell and the maid guide her along. And as they pushed through the crowds she became aware of some undercurrent of excitement. She caught words and snatches of talk: "The way reports are coming in from the pool-rooms, he must have cleaned up over a million dollars." "Biggest swindle in the history of the turf." "Oh, they've got the goods on him." "He bet ten thousand here at the track at twelve to one—sure he was in on it." "This means his finish politically and every other way."

Then she saw Beachey.

"My dear Constance, I have been looking for you. You must get out of here at once."

"Not until I know what is happening. Tell me."

"I will. But not here." He took her arm. "Do come."

"No." She leaned against Delia, and looked at him defiantly, her eyes hollow in her ghastly face.

He sighed.

"Judge Jeffries," he said reluctantly, "is involved in a terrible racing-scandal. He has been ruled off the turf for life!"

Can Constance undo her carefully wrought revenge and clear the judge's name? See the next instalment of this engrossing story in November EVERYBODY'S—out October 15th.

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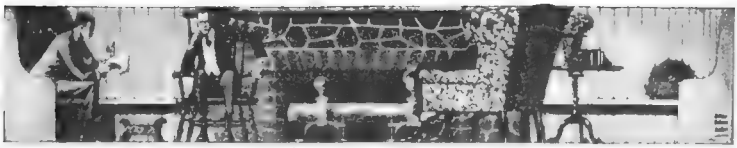

Everybody's Chimney Corner

Where Reader, Author and Editor Gather to Talk Things Over

THERE aren't many men in this speed-mad age who would stick at a thing five years before getting results. John T. McIntyre, author of "Kildare of the Border" (page 2), a serial which begins in this issue, is one of them. At the end of five years of writing he managed to sell a "few character bits to newspapers—very few, though, and got very little for them." He continues:

In the following five years, I sold two or three short stories. These years were hard. In the last of them I began my first book, "The Ragged Edge," which sold rather poorly; there did not seem to be a public for a neighborhood chronicle told as this one was. But it did open the door for me, somewhat; my things began to appear in quite good places.

During this period I made more than one effort at play-building; but with no success. Now, however, I formed a working partnership with an experienced theatrical man. We planned dramas and comedies together, and I wrote them. I'm appalled, now, when I think of how many I wrote, and of what terrific stuff they were made. But they brought money—a thin, but steady stream, for several years.

In 1908 I published my second book, "In the Dead of Night." "The Ragged Edge" had been cut from actual life; but "In the Dead of Night" was a swift-moving thriller having its roots in the air.

ARNOLD DALY gave Mr. McIntyre his first real opening in the theater, producing a play by him called "The Wedding Journey." Daly played it under three managements, the last of which was that of Arthur Hopkins, who produced it at the Harris Theater, New York, in the fall of 1912, under the name of "Steve." But, to quote the author, "it was true, and ugly, and failed to attract."

About this time I signed a contract to do a series of detective books. These dealt with the experiences of Ashton-Kirk. There are now four of them; the public must like them, for they sell consistently. It must have been three years ago that I wrote a fantastic comedy called "A Young Man's Fancy." The talent held that it was a "property" to plunge on. And plunge they did—to the extent of between fifty and sixty thousand dollars. Joseph Urban painted and built the scenes—thirteen sets—beautiful, as only he can do them, but altogether unworkable. The play was withdrawn in disaster,

John T. McIntyre, author of "Kildare of the Border," who was plucky enough to stick at writing five years before he succeeded in selling anything.

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sunken by the money spent upon it, and the weight of the effects.

This was a hard blow and I felt I must get away from the theater for a while and forget it. For a long time I had wanted to write a book of maritime America; it was a project that never failed to thrill me. And nothing could be farther from the hurly-burly of Broadway. So I sat down with the great heap of books and maps and charts and lists which I had collected through fifteen years; I gave three months—all of one summer—to the reading of these. Then I began to write; at the end of thirteen months my book, "Blowing Weather," was finished.

ALBERT RICHARD WETJEN, with "The Thing That Mattered" (page 141), makes his first appearance in EVERYBODY'S. Other stories will follow, and we know of no better way of arousing your interest in him in advance than by letting him give you a sketch of his exciting career:

When he was twenty, my father suffered with the "wanderlust" and disappeared into Australia for eight years. Later he went to New Zealand. One of his brothers was a master mariner in his early twenties. His father wandered a long way before settling in London, England. A great-grandfather of mine was a parson in a little church in Tromsö, Norway, from which country we first came.

On my mother's side all the men were sailors. Her father was a carpenter in the days of the old "clipper" ships, wrecked once off the Yang-tse River and with the second mate was the only survivor. He sailed for thirty-five years. His father was also a ship's carpenter. And his father before him. All my maternal uncles are sailors, one a sailmaker in windjammers, one a fireman. Two of my cousins are seagoing ship's engineers, one is a steward, two others sailors. It seems we were always wrapped up in the sea.

MR. WETJEN was born in London, and went to sea at fourteen; he was wrecked twice before his sixteenth birthday—once in the Bay of Biscay by fire and once near Cape Race by fog and the sea. The second time he lived five weeks in a hut made from timbers from the ship before relief came. He continues:

Have been "on the beach" in Liverpool, St. John, New Brunswick, Vancouver, B. C., and Winnipeg. Worked my way across Canada from coast to coast. Beat it across the line into Washington and Oregon. Slept in most of the jails between Blaine and Portland. Charge vagrancy. Had a spell at railroading, farming, mining, stevedoring. Was one of the crew of the *Berwick Castle* when that ship took the Sultan of Zanzibar prisoner of war to St. Helena.

Was twenty-three last August. Started writing at about eighteen—my first story was woven around the Sultan of Zanzibar and an incident that occurred during the voyage to St. Helena. Since then have appeared in ten or more publications. Figure some day to own my own schooner and run around the world. Just now the scheme is in abeyance due to my recent "splicing" with a Duluth girl. We're on our honeymoon, hence the preceding jumble. Served in the British Merchant Service during the war, for which the two regular medals issued were gratefully received. Also served in the Fifty-third Manchesters, British Army. As to my tastes, I like poetry, swimming, music, boxing, sailing and beer. Dislike the Eighteenth Amendment, and all women novelists. Colleges don't interest me. Learnt what I know from knocking about the world. Belong to no clubs, lodges or street gangs. Started out to become a civil servant, gave the idea up because I disliked the study involved, went to sea to escape and because all the family went sooner or later, and started writing because of a dislike of work.

THERE is little of an autobiographical nature in the Chimney Corner contribution of William Merriam Rouse ("The Capias," page 93). He confesses that long ago he ceased to take "myself with sufficient seriousness to write a conventional sketch."

I have staggered through nearly four decades and at this point I doubt whether I have any opinions to express, although you kindly suggest that I may have. At the moment my clearest impression from the cinematographic series of impressions I receive from external phenomena is one of incongruity. Homer Croy told me that I could go out to mail a letter and have more adventures than he could in a trip around the world, but that is not strictly accurate; it would be better to call them incongruities. For instance, my father intended me for the army, I intended to take a doctor's degree and teach philosophy, but I turned out to be a writer.

Long ago when I was working in a stove store for a dollar a day the man with whom I worked was bigger than I was. So he always made me take the lower and heavier end of the stove when we delivered one, as we so often did, up three or four flights of stairs. Could fate deal a more backhanded slap? Once I had a crystal gazer look into one of my past lives. She saw me holding a long session in a medieval tavern at the end of which I went forth to the public square to make a speech. The speech apparently was going well when I inadvertently fell into the fountain in the square. Thereupon I was arrested and marched off to jail by the watch, not for intoxication but for disturbing the city's pet fish.

MR. ROUSE has a home in the Adirondacks and as he expresses it: "In this life I ease my feelings by going home often to enjoy my dogs and learn from them better how to live. Nothing in my opinion will do more for human character than association with a good dog."

He goes on:

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A writer with an unusual beginning. Eugene Jones "was born of poor but honest parents worth about half a million."

William Merriam Rouse likes the mountains, likes dogs, and he writes good fiction. "The Capias," a short story by him, appears in this issue.

Albert Richard Wetjen went to sea at fourteen and at twenty-three is writing sea stories. There is one in this issue; others will follow.

An author with a checkered career. John C. Brownell worked in a sawmill, was a printer, a singer and an actor.

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But even there, among the pines and hemlocks and woodchucks, incongruity is rampant. I once had a big dog named Tristram Shandy, a cross between a Great Dane and a bloodhound, who was possessed of the most admirable moral traits but whose intellectual qualities were not marked by great brilliance. One day word was brought to me that he had fallen from the top of Bullrocks, a thirty-foot cliff. I sat down to mourn and to gather my resolutions to go and bury him. Within ten minutes he came weaving up the road, dizzy but otherwise intact. Man or beast other than my dog could not have survived that fall and that time I was grateful for the inverted view which Fate seemed to be taking of my affairs.

THE author of "The Ghost Whistle" (page 132) is Eugene Jones, who admits: "I was born of poor but honest parents worth about half a million. My first days were spent in comparative poverty with a nurse who insisted on addressing me in German. I have forgotten the German but not the nurse." And to continue:

My first novel was written when I was twelve; and it dealt chiefly with Indians biting the dust, and cowboys shooting from the hip. Since that time I have changed my style and somewhat cut down the number of violent deaths per page; but I still incline toward very mellow melodrama. There are two reasons why I cannot tell you I worked eighteen years as a Pullman porter to accumulate railroad experience. First, I don't know how to make up a berth; and second—you've guessed it—my color barred me! It was always one of my bitterest disappointments as a child—not to be able to swell the notable black ranks of the Pullman legion.

At a reasonable age I married, instantly becoming poorer, less honest, but immeasurably happy. Since then I have been writing very furiously. To those who would write stories for the magazines, I say: Give up the game and become a carpenter or a motion-picture operator or a chef or a seamstress. And to those who choose to follow this advice I say: It is better so, for under no circumstances would you have succeeded!

JOHN C. BROWNELL ("The Ultimate Good," page 72), says he doesn't know much about himself except that he has had a checkered career. And he's right.

I left school to go to work in a sawmill. Then I learned the printer's trade, becoming an expert in three-color and half-tone work. One day somebody discovered I had a voice and I went on the stage, singing in comic opera and later acting with John Barrymore, William Courtney, Mary Ryan, and others. During the long run of "The Fortune Hunter," George Loane Tucker and I lived together—I cooking the meals, he washing the dishes. In our spare time we wrote motion-picture stories which we sold and, being mercenary, we wrote in parts for ourselves. Is it any wonder that we became rich?

It was turning a corner and bumping into a producer that made me a scenario editor. I was modest and told him I didn't think I could be an editor. He said: "You have acted on the stage and in pictures, written and sold stories and helped to direct them. Why in hell can't you hold down the job of editor?" Well, he convinced me. I became a scenario editor, forsook the grease paint, and ceased living in a trunk. I might add that my favorite pursuit is loafing around Long Island in a sailboat.

THE work of I. A. R. Wylie ("The Double Code," page 31) has attained wide popularity both in this country and in England. She is a native of Melbourne, Australia, of Scotch descent, and has had a most unusual career which she summarizes as follows:

Came to England, aged three. Mother died when I was five. After that brought up nohow by father. No education or any intercourse with other children until I was twelve. Spent my days roaming alone with my bicycle over the country. At the age of eleven had already done several long cycling tours—sometimes doing fifty miles a day—extending over a week, completely on my own, staying where I chose and paying my own hotel bills out of an unusually lavish supply of money. At fourteen toured the fiords of Norway unchaperoned, staying a week at a hotel in Trondhjem. (Father, as may be guessed, extraordinary personality.) After that, awakening of parental sense of responsibility. Three years at a finishing school in Brussels, where I outraged all sense of discipline by my ideas; then two years acquiring the rudiments of an education at Cheltenham College, in England. Then to another finishing school in Germany. There, for family reasons, decided to break loose and start on my own. No money, but at the age of twenty had written the first story submitted for publication which had been at once accepted for five pounds. Seemed magnificent sum to completely justify my break for independence. It did. From that time no turning back. All stories accepted in England at increasingly good prices. First novel written at twenty-two, accepted at once in England and America, serialized in English magazine, in England went into eight editions and subsequently filmed. Went ahead steadily—no set-backs or disappointments. In 1917 wrote "Toward Morning," which opened up new fields in America through the *Saturday Evening Post*. Hope in another ten or twelve years to write something first class.

Widely traveled. Norway, Germany, France, Italy, U. S. A. (ten months touring California by car), Central America, Mexico, and so forth. Came to England two years before the war and made a home there. Tried for war-work at the front, or as near as I could get, but broke down with severe illness.

Pastimes: all out-of-door sports. Games generally. But have a passion for "household gods" and making the home "just right!" Love traveling better than anything in the world—except home.

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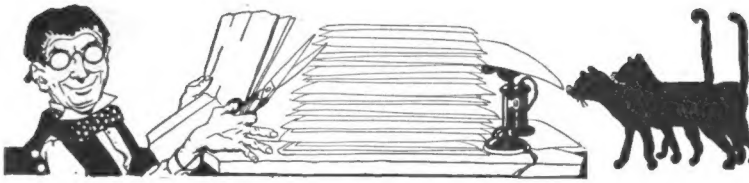

Prose *and* Worse, *by* Gridley Adams

(*Harrisburg, Pa., Patriot*)

A daughter was born on March 5th at the Andrew Kaul Memorial Hospital, St. Mary's, to Mrs. Cresson Hill, of Ridgway. Shumaker president. The organization is purely musical in its purpose.

(I. C. W.)

Usually, for the first few years.

(*Ads. in Omaha Bee*)

Scholarship in Klondike Health School, teaching how to live 50 years without a cold or cure one in 48 hours. Swap for a set of teeth or a good suit of clothes. S-325.

Get him some clothes quick, or he'll chatter loose his lower set.

Mrs. Ellis Gardner will leave this week for Bennington, where she will reside with her husband this winter. (MISS O. K. M.)

Must be *some* old-fashioned folks are left yet.

(*On a Pittsfield, Mass., restaurant bill of fare*)

"Strawberry Shirt Cake."

(J. H. R.)

Where appetite lingers in the lap of red flannels.

(*Shelbyville, Ind., Union*)

Henry Marxman, admitted Monday, was separated on Tuesday morning.

Well, you won't catch *me* anywhere around *there*.

(*Eastford Items*)

George Griggs who lives alone has been ill of grip. Doctors have been good friends to him and a fine harvest has been reaped.

Pecuniarily speaking?

(*El Paso Herald*)

FOR SALE—Sixteen nice Rhode Island red hens and rooster, all laying. 2922 Alamogordo St.

(W. V. H.)

I'll bet that's some of Luther Burbank's doings.

(*On menu of Wendell Hotel, Pittsfield, Mass.*)

Consumme Andalouse—15c.

And everybody *jumped* at the chance to get some. (Probably had to.)

(*Vermont paper*)

Everett Greene is confined to his home with illness in the Roger's block. (MISS O. K. M.)

Usually a fatal spot.

(*Tucson, Ariz., Citizen*)

LEASE—Maria C. de Soto to V. S. Griffith, one year, river-bed of Santa Cruz river, between Congress St. bridge and Alameda St.

(MISS N. M. K.)

The choir will now sing, "Rocked in the Cradle of the Deep."

(*From a Texas weekly*)

D. C. Crites was in from southeast of here Friday looking after business.

The wise man never butts in without being sure that he is able to butt out again.

That's handing something to D. C., all right!

(*Four successive advs. in San Francisco Call*)

FUNERAL DIRECTORS

The Old Firm—Halsted & Co., 1122 Sutter St.

Complete Funeral—$75
We are pleased to give prices without obligation.
D. J. Morrison Co.

Julius D. Godeau
(Independent of the Trust)
Godeau's prices are a real insurance to the living —your saving.

But always ask for BLUHILL Green Chile Cheese.

(MISS TRULY SHATTUCK.)

(*Falmouth, Ky., Outlook*)

FOR SALE—Two porch shades, four feet wide, good as new; also porch swing in good condition. MRS. HARRY DOUGHERTY. Phone 37.

But why has the engagement not yet been announced?

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(Eastford Items)

Charles Delaney's family is rallying from sickness, so you may expect all will be well and chickens will peep all along the line.

H. J. Bouck and family won't occupy their summer home here in town this summer, so reported, not constantly.

We learn with sadness of Mrs. William Kennedy. Report said she deceased after her return from Alabama. She was at the Inn all last season and was called an excellent cook by hundreds who partook of chicken dinners many Sundays. She won't reside at the Inn this summer.

Mrs. Sarah Carpenter has gone to her daughter, Mrs. George Frink, lately in St. Joseph's hospital, and is better than a half dozen dead women.

Strawberries are a planty. Prices numerable.

We are sorry to have the sick suffer. This stepping out without warning seems sad, but they will be dead a long time.

Clifford Bowen sold his ox to a man in Baltic, neighbor of the man who went out of sight recently and died or wandered away.

James Neville, our decorator and painter, has been resting a few days from overwork. Lots in town much better off since the rum habit vanished.

Mrs. N. W. Kennedy is owner of a Buick car.

Miss Gardner Grant has a smaller car to her liking.

Clarence Witter called on us to-day (Thursday) and took dinner at the Inn.

Real Southern hospitality, I'd say.

(Mears, Mich., News)

Mrs. Will Burgess and her husband and his mother ate their Sunday salads with the David Cummings in Mears, and examined the ostrich-feather tail on Smoke, the Persian cat.

Will Peck, the plumber, can fix your drinking-water pipes and your dish-water pipes.

Well, he won't get anywheres near *me*.

(Headline in New Orleans Times-Picayune)

"BARBERS PREDICT DOLLAR HAIRCUTS"

I'll say that's some trimming.

(Kelat, Ky., Items)

Shelba Draper and two sisters, Misses Cora and Ora, spent Sunday at Forklick.

Miss Ella and Hazel Draper spent a few days last week with Miss Inez Blackburn.

J. T. Draper and son, Shelba, and daughter, Miss Hazel, were shopping in Williamstown Saturday afternoon.

Mrs. J. T. Draper and two daughters, Misses Cora and Ora, spent Saturday afternoon with Miss Inez Blackburn.

Mr. and Mrs. Spencer Scott spent Thursday afternoon with Mr. and Mrs. J. T. Draper and family.

Mr. and Mrs. Spencer Scott spent Friday afternoon with Mr. and Mrs. J. T. Draper and family.

Yes, I thought that *Thursday* dinner was a little "skimpy," myself.

(Hartford Times)

FIFTY MISS TRAIN BECAUSE IT LEAVES ON TIME.

Hick, Hick, Hooray!

(Kelat, Ky.)

Mrs. Sarah, the estimable wife of "Dock" Warner, deceased, wishes through this medium to thank all who so ably assisted her during the illness and death of her husband. Many of the burdens were lifted from her shoulders and life's pathway was thus smoothed and softened.

Gee, I thought "Dock" was an all 'round good sorter chap.

(Pendleton Ridge, Ky.)

Strange as it may seem, we really saw a pulpit orator last Sunday, whose time was devoted to his sermons instead of having to "hist" his trousers, first one side, then the other. He had on suspenders.

And Aunt Betty Hicks is a great-grandmother! But she doesn't look it.

Alex Sullivan has purchased a Ford. His chauffeur is running the car with one hand and fanning him with the other.

Joshua Woodhead had nothing small enough in pants around the waist, and not to miss a sale he said he would have a bill of pants in in the afternoon. In the meantime, to keep an eye on the customer, and not let him get in the hands of a dealer who would keep his hands on the back of the pants and draw them up in front to fit, he invited him to take lunch with him. He took him up to Balser's, Jason's favorite place to lunch, and filled him up on dog, cheese and crackers, washed down with a liberal supply of near-beer, and when he brought him back to the store he had no trouble in finding a fit.

(Falmouth, Ky., Outlook)

Mr. Charles Ruf was kicked by a horse at his home, below Walcott, Saturday.

***I'll* say it was.**

(Knoxville, Ky.)

Dr. and Mrs. Howe entertained for dinner Sunday, Mrs. Schnorr and daughter, Miss Arlie and son, John L., Mr. and Mrs. Adam Schnorr and little son, all of Plum Creek.

Lucky they didn't stay all night, or nobody would have slept a wink.

(Falmouth, Ky., Outlook)

The wedding of Miss Fannie Mae Carr and Mr. Forest E. King at the beautiful country home of Mr. and Mrs. Chas. Hicks, last Sunday, marked one of the most important social events of this locality in many months. Miss Fannie Mae made a picture not easily forgotten, as she stood in all her purity and innocence before a large concourse of witnesses.

Happy the bride the sun shines *on*.

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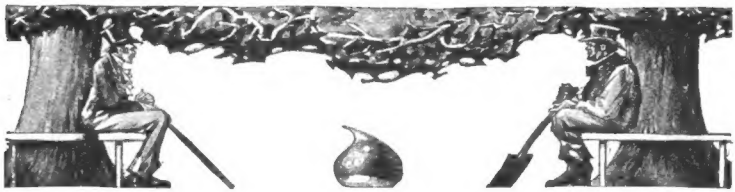

Everybody's Chestnut Tree

Editor's Note: Though the sign is the Chestnut Tree, no story is barred by its youth. We will gladly pay for available ones. Address all manuscripts to "The Chestnut Tree," enclosing stamped addressed envelope.

SAM JOHNSON, a colored "sheik," was joy-riding over a portion of the hilly Southwest in company with the lady of his choice. The car was rolling swiftly down a long, rocky slope when Sam, attempting to slow up, found to his dismay that the brakes were out of order. His companion, realizing that Sam had lost control of the car, began to scream at the top of her voice and prepare to jump.

"Keep yo' seat," shouted Sam, gripping the wheel with both hands.

"Won't do nothin' of the kind!" cried the lady. "I ain't ridin' no car what can't be stopped."

"Now ain't yo' foolish!" said Sam, pointing to the bottom of the hill. "Look at that good, strong stone fence down there, woman!"

A, AN American, thirty, living in New York and holding down a ten-thousand-dollar job, held the following conversation with B, an acquaintance, during which he evinced not the slightest suspicion that there might be a laugh in it.

A—Aren't there any new shows in town?

B—Yes, a number, I think. Why?

A—Well, I was hunting for one last night and finally I went into that thing called "Romeo and Juliet." Right from the first I thought it was an old show and I got madder and madder.

B—What did you do?

A—I went to the box office, told 'em it was an old show and they'd got to give me my money back. And you bet they did.

IN CERTAIN sections of Missouri the making of moonshine whisky is still the principal industry.

A small native of this district was interestedly interrogating an eastern commercial salesman, a being from another world, as to his life, connections, etc.

"You got a brother?" he inquired.

"I had one, but he died."

"Got shot?"

"No, he wasn't shot."

"Drink himself to death?"

"Certainly not."

"I knowed you was a liar," exclaimed the boy triumphantly. "There's only them two ways of dyin'."

A HOLLYWOOD motion-picture director was trying to persuade a super to wrestle with a lion.

"You needn't be afraid," he said; "the beast is perfectly tame. He never tasted raw meat."

"No; perhaps not," replied the perspiring actor. "But that doesn't mean that he may not have curiosity."

HELEN was at her first party. When refreshments were served she refused a second helping of ice-cream with a polite "No, thanks," although she looked wistful.

"Do have some more, dear," the hostess urged.

"Mother told me to say 'No, thank you,'" the little girl explained naively, "But I don't believe she knew how small the dishes were going to be."

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THE continued exodus from the South of the colored population, although a matter of concern in industrial centers, is not without a bit of humor now and then.

At the terminal station in Macon, Georgia, a party of adventurers was entraining recently for points north, and one of the party bidding good-bye to another of his color said: "Well, Sam, when you comin' to Detroit?"

"I belongs to de 'B' class," replied Sam.

"How's dat? What you mean by de 'B' class, nigger?"

"What I means," said Sam, "is dat I *be* here when you's gwine away an' I *be's* here when you comes back."

THE man from New Jersey was telling the Utah man that the mosquitoes in Utah were as nothing compared with the ones back East. In the end he made a bet that he could take off his shirt and let the Utah pests bite him for ten minutes without even taking a slap at them.

At the end of nine minutes the Utah man saw a good chance to lose the bet, for, although the New Jersey man was covered with mosquitoes he hadn't even quivered. Something must be done. Picking up a burning glass the Utah man threw its rays on the New Jersey man's back. The man from the East gave a yell and smacked his back with his hand.

"There's one from home," he yelled, as he paid the bet.

"DO YOU know the nature of an oath, madam?"

"Well, I ought to, sir. We have just moved, and my husband put down the carpet."

A WASHINGTON newspaper man relates that with the coming of spring the usual fever of that season asserted itself, and he took the opportunity of running into Virginia for a fishing trip.

Becoming interested in a discussion of the merits of the various fish in the Virginia streams, he turned at length to the old negro boatman and said:

"Uncle, don't you think yellow perch is altogether the best fish in the river?"

"Yessuh," replied the old man, "yaller perch am de bes' fish here, always scusin' de white shad."

FOR weeks he had been ill in the hospital. With the beginning of convalescence he called loudly for food, declaring he was being starved.

"The doctor says you may have something to eat to-morrow," said the nurse soothingly.

On the morrow she entered and announced,

"Here's your dinner." And she gave him a spoonful of tapioca, adding, "The doctor says that everything else you do must be in the same proportion."

"Nurse," he gasped, "I want to do some reading now; please bring me a postage-stamp."

"TO-MORROW is my birthday, dearie, and I'm going to take a day off."

"Why, darling, you never took off less than a year before."

A SHIFTLESS specimen of humanity came down-town one morning, and, joining a group on a corner, announced that he was going to leave town—said he could not live in it any longer. Some one asked him what was the matter.

"Well," he said, "the town is all right; but it's the hardest place in the world for a woman to get work in."

HAVING been carefully brought up, a young man wrote home to his father from a distant city, asking advice about marriage. He had left the parental nest early to seek his fortune, and now had found not only that but a girl to share it with. The answer came promptly:

DEAR SON CHARLES:

Marriage is a wonderful institution if you find the right mate. The best advice I can give you is to compare your girl to your mother, with whom I have been so ideally happy for the past thirty years. If she can even approximate your dear mother's home-making, housekeeping and always even temper, you are a lucky young man, and I give you my blessing and advise you to grab her at once.

Your loving
FATHER.

P. S. Your mother has just left the room. Don't be a damn fool. Stay single.

RASTUS: I hear dey done found de bones of Columbus.

ENOCH: Sho, I never knew he was a gamblin' man.

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